The Rover Boys on the Ocean

By

ARTHUR M. WINFIELD

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AS THE SHIP CAME CLOSER THEY MADE HER OUT TO BE A BIG "TRAMP" FROM THE SOUTH AMERICAN TRADE.—*Page 233.*

THE ROVER BOYS ON THE OCEAN

OR

A CHASE FOR A FORTUNE

BY

ARTHUR M. WINFIELD

AUTHOR OF "THE ROVER BOYS AT SCHOOL," "THE ROVER BOYS IN THE JUNGLE," "THE MISSING TIN BOX," "BY PLUCK, NOT LUCK," "SCHOOLDAYS OF FRED HARLEY," "POOR BUT PLUCKY," ETC.

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THE ROVER BOYS ON THE RIVER;
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THE ROVER BOYS IN CAMP;
Or, The Rivals of Pine Island.
THE ROVER BOYS ON LAND AND SEA;
Or, The Crusoes of Seven Islands.
THE ROVER BOYS IN THE MOUNTAINS;
Or, A Hunt for Fun and Fortune.
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE GREAT LAKES;
Or, The Secret of the Island Cave.
THE ROVER BOYS OUT WEST;
Or, The Search for a Lost Mine.
THE ROVER BOYS IN THE JUNGLE;
Or, Stirring Adventures in Africa.
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE OCEAN;
Or, A Chase for a Fortune.
THE ROVER BOYS AT SCHOOL;
Or, The Cadets of Putnam Hall.

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INTRODUCTION.

My Dear Boys: "The Rover Boys on the Ocean" is a complete tale in itself, but forms a companion volume to "The Rover Boys at School," which preceded it.

In the former volume I tried to give my young readers a glimpse of life as it actually is in one of our famous military boarding schools, with its brightness and shadows, its trials and triumphs, its little plots and counterplots, its mental and physical contests, and all that goes to make up such an existence; in the present tale I have given a little more of this, and also related the particulars of an ocean trip, which, from a small and unpretentious beginning, developed into something entirely unlooked for —an outing calculated to test the nerves of the bravest of American youths. How Dick, Tom, and Sam, and their friends stood it, and how they triumphed over their enemies, I will leave for the story itself to explain. This volume will be followed by another, to be en-

titled, "The Rover Boys in the Jungle," telling of curious adventures in the heart of Africa.

As the first volume of the series was so well received, my one wish is that the present tale may find equal favor at your hands.

Affectionately and sincerely yours,

ARTHUR M. WINFIELD.

September 20, 1899.

THE ROVER BOYS ON THE OCEAN

CHAPTER I.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE ROVER BOYS.

"LUFF up a little, Sam, or the *Spray* will run on the rocks."

"All right, Dick. I haven't got sailing down quite as fine as you yet. How far do you suppose we are from Albany?"

"Not over eight or nine miles. If this wind holds out we'll make that city by six o'clock. I'll tell you what, sailing on the Hudson suits me first-rate."

"And it suits me, too," put in Tom Rover, addressing both of his brothers. "I like it ten times better than staying on Uncle Randolph's farm."

"But I can't say that I like it better than life at Putnam Hall," smiled Sam Rover, as he threw over the tiller of the little yacht. "I'm quite anxious to meet Captain Putnam and Fred, Frank, and Larry again."

"Oh, so am I," answered Tom Rover. "But an outing on the Hudson is just the best kind of a vacation. By the way, I wonder if all of our old friends will be back?"

"Most of them will be."

"And our enemies?"

"Dan Baxter won't come back," answered Dick seriously. "He ran away to Chicago with two hundred dollars belonging to his father, and I guess that's the end of him—so far as Putnam Hall and we are concerned. What a bully he was!"

"I feel it in my bones, Dick, that we'll meet Dan Baxter again," came from Sam Rover. "Don't you remember that in that note he left when he ran away he said he would take pains to get square with us some day?"

"He was a big blower, Sam," put in Tom. "I am not afraid of him. And his chum, Mumps, was a regular sneak and coward. I hope Putnam Hall will be free from all such fellows during the next term. But we—— Hold hard, Sam—there is another yacht bearing down upon us!"

Tom Rover leaped to his feet and so did Dick. Tom was right; another craft, considerably larger than their own, was headed directly for them.

"Throw her over to starboard!" sang out

Dick Rover. "And be quick about it—or we'll have a smashup sure!" And he leaped to his brother's assistance, while Tom did the same.

The Rover brothers were three in number—Dick, the oldest and most studious; Tom next, as full of fun as an egg is full of meat, and Sam the youngest.

In a former volume of this series, entitled, "The Rover Boys at School," I related how the three youths had been sent by their uncle, Randolph Rover, to Putnam Hall, a military boarding school, situated upon Cayuga Lake, in New York State.

Whether the three boys were orphans or not was a question that could not be answered. Their father, Anderson Rover, had been a geological expert and rich mine owner, and, returning from the West, had set sail for Africa, with the intention of exploring the central region of that country, in the hope of locating some valuable gold mines. The boys and their uncle knew that he had journeyed from the western coast toward the interior with a number of natives, and that was all they did know, although they had made numerous inquiries, and hoped for the best. The lads' mother was dead; and all these things had happened years before they had been sent to boarding school.

Randolph Rover was an eccentric but kind-hearted man, given over entirely to scientific farming, of which, so far, sad to relate, he had made a rather costly failure. He spent all of his time over his agricultural books and in the fields, and was glad enough to get the boys off his hands by sending them to the military school. When vacation came he wondered what he should do with them during the summer, but the problem was solved by the boys, who hated to think of remaining on the farm, and who proposed a trip up and down the Hudson River and through Long Island Sound, providing their guardian would furnish the boat and bear the expense of the outing. The outcome was the chartering of the yacht *Spray,* and all of the boys took lessons in sailing from an old tar who knew exactly how such a craft should be handled.

At Putnam Hall the boys had made a number of friends, and also several enemies, and had had several surprising adventures, as my old readers already know. Who their friends and their enemies were, and what further adventures were in store for the three brothers, I will leave for the pages following to reveal. At present let us turn our attention to the boat which seemed on the point of running down the *Spray.*

Like their own craft, the other boat carried but

a single mast. But the stick was at least ten feet longer than the mast of the *Spray,* and the boat was correspondingly larger in every respect. As she came nearer the Rover boys saw that she contained two occupants, a boy and a somewhat elderly man.

"Sheer off there!" cried Dick, at the top of his lungs. "Do you want to run us down?"

"Get out of the way yourself!" came back the answer from the boy in the other boat.

"We can't get out—we are almost on the rocks now!" yelled Tom. Then he gave a start of surprise. "Why, it's Mumps!"

"By jinks, it is John Fenwick!" muttered Dick. "I remember now that he came from the Hudson River and that his folks owned a boat." He raised his voice. "Are you going to sheer off or not?"

By this time the two boats were nearly bowsprit to bowsprit, and Sam Rover's heart almost stopped beating. But now Mumps spoke to the man with him, and his craft, called the *Falcon,* sheered to port, scraping the *Spray's* side as she did so.

"Mumps, what do you mean by such work?" demanded Dick, when the immediate danger was past.

"Ha! ha! I thought I would give you a

scare," laughed the former sneak of Putnam Hall. "You needn't be afraid but what I and old Bill Goss here know how to keep the *Falcon* out of danger."

"It was foolishness to run so close," said Tom.

"Don't you talk to me, Tom Rover. I've had enough of you, mind that."

"And I want you to mind and keep off next time, Mumps. If you don't——"

"What will you do?"

"I'll be tempted to come aboard the *Falcon* and give you a thrashing."

"You'll never set foot on my boat, and I'm not afraid of you," roared Mumps. "You think you got the best of me at Putnam Hall, but you didn't, and I want you to know it."

"How is your friend, Dan Baxter?" cried Sam. "Has he landed in jail yet?"

"Never mind Dan Baxter," growled Mumps, growing red in the face; and then the two yachts moved so far apart that further talk was impossible.

"Well, I didn't expect to meet him," muttered Dick, after the three brothers had cooled down a bit. "He must have known we were in this boat."

"I saw his craft last night, down near Cats-

kill," said Tom. "I'll wager he has been following us up."

"He wouldn't do that unless he had some reason for it."

"I believe he would sink us if he could," put in Sam. "To my mind he is almost as bad as Baxter."

"Hardly, Sam; Dan Baxter is a thief and the son of a thief," came from Tom. "By the way, I wonder if Arnold Baxter is still in the hospital at Ithaca."

"More than likely, since he was so badly hurt by that fall from the train. If we—— Look, Mumps has turned around and is following us!"

Sam pointed to the *Falcon,* and his brothers saw that he was right. Soon the larger craft was again within hailing distance.

"Hi, Mumps, what are you following us for?" demanded Dick, as he stepped up on the stern seat.

"Didn't know I was following you," was the sour rejoinder. "I have a right to sail where I please."

"If you have any game in mind I advise you not to try it on."

"What game would I have, Dick Rover?"

"Some game to get yourself into trouble."

"I know my own business."

"All right; you can go about your business. But don't try to step on our toes—or you'll get the worst of it."

"So you are going to play the part of a bully."

"No; I'm only giving you fair warning. If you let us alone we'll let you alone."

"You have been watching the movements of the *Falcon* since day before yesterday," went on Mumps, slowly and distinctly, as though he expected his words to have great effect.

"Watching your boat——" began Dick and Tom simultaneously.

"Yes, watching my boat—and I don't like it," answered Fenwick, and his face grew dark.

"Why should we watch your boat?" demanded Sam.

"Never mind why. You've been watching her, and that's enough."

"And why should we put ourselves out to that extent—when we are merely out for pleasure," said Dick. "There is no fun in watching a fellow like you, I'm sure."

"John is right; ye have been a-watchin' this boat," growled the old sailor named Bill Goss, who, it may be as well to state here, was thoroughly under his young master's thumb for reasons best known to himself. "If I had my way

I'd wollop the lot on ye!" And he shook his fist at the occupants of the *Spray*.

"You keep your oar out!" cried Dick sternly. "You are entirely mistaken in your suspicions. We are not spying on you or anybody, and if you——"

Dick was permitted to go no further. While Bill Goss was speaking the *Spray* had been caught by a sudden puff of wind and sent over to starboard. Now the *Falcon* came on swiftly, and in an instant her sharp bow crashed into the Rover boys' boat. The shock of the collision caused the *Spray* to shiver from stem to stern, and then, with a jagged hole in her side, she began slowly to sink.

CHAPTER II.

THE ENCOUNTER ON THE RIVER.

For the instant after the collision occurred none of the Rover boys uttered a word. Tom and Sam stared in amazement at Mumps, while Dick gazed helplessly at the damage done.

"Pull her away, quick, Bill!" cried Mumps in a low voice to the old sailor, who at once sprang forward and shoved the two yachts apart with a long boat-hook. Then the rudder of the *Falcon* was put hard aport, and she swung away for a distance of half a dozen yards.

"We are sinking!" gasped Tom, who was the first of the three brothers to find his voice.

"Mumps, you rascal, what do you mean by this work?" demanded Dick. And then, without waiting for an answer, he turned to Sam. "Steer for the shore and beach her—if you can."

"I don't believe we can make it, Dick. But we can try."

"We'll have you locked up for this, Mumps," shouted Tom.

THE "FALCON" CAME ON SWIFTLY, AND IN AN INSTANT HER SHARP BOW CRASHED INTO THE ROVER BOYS' BOAT.—*Page 9.*

"I couldn't help it—it was an accident," returned the former sneak of Putnam Hall glibly. "You should have kept out of the way."

"We'll see about that later on."

"Maybe you want us to help you."

"We shan't ask you for the favor," burst out Sam. "I'd rather drown first." But Sam did not exactly mean this. He and his brothers could all swim, and he felt certain that they were in no immediate danger of their lives.

"You had better not ask any favors. I wouldn't pick you up for a barrel of money."

"I think we'll have to settle this in court, Mumps," said Dick, as quietly as he could.

"You can't prove I ran you down."

"Don't you dare to have us hauled up," put in Bill Goss. "It was an accident, jest as John says. I reckon as how it will teach ye a lesson not to follow us ag'in."

By this time the two yachts were once more so far apart that talking from one to the other became difficult. Besides this, the Rover boys felt that they must turn their whole attention to the *Spray,* so no more was said.

The yacht had been struck just at the water line and the hole made in her side was all of six inches in diameter. Through this the water was pouring into the hold at a lively rate.

"We're going down as sure as guns," groaned Tom. "Steer her right for the shore, Sam," and this was done, and just as the *Spray* began to settle they ran upon a muddy and rocky flat about thirty feet from the river bank proper.

"There, we can't go down now," said Dick, with something of a sigh of relief. "Let us lower the mainsail and jib before the wind sends us over on our beam ends."

The others understood the value of the advice, and soon the mainsail of the yacht came down with a bang, and the jib followed. The *Spray* seemed inclined to list to port, but stopped settling when her deck line touched the surface of the river.

"That settles yachting for the present," said Dick in deep disgust.

"And the worst of it is, we haven't even a small boat to go ashore in," added Sam. "What's to do?"

"There is a rowboat putting out from the shore now," cried Tom. "Hullo, there!" he shouted, and waved his hand.

The shout was returned, and the rowboat was headed in their direction. As it came closer they saw that its occupant was a middle-aged man of pleasant appearance.

"So you had a smash-up, eh?" shouted the

man, as soon as he came near. "Anybody hurt?"

"Our boat is hurt," answered Tom dryly.

"Much of a hole?"

"Big enough to put us on the bottom."

"So I see. Want me to take you ashore?"

"Yes," put in Dick, "if you will be kind enough to do it."

"Certainly; always willing to aid anybody in distress. That other craft run you down in short order, didn't she?"

"Did you see it?" burst out Sam eagerly.

"To be sure I did."

"Then you know it was her fault."

"I do. She had no right to follow you up as she did."

"I'm glad you saw the mix-up, Mr.——"

"Martin Harris is my name. I'm an old boatman around here—keep boats to hire, and the like. And who is this I'm to take ashore?"

"My name is Sam Rover. These are my two brothers, Dick and Tom."

"Do you know who it was ran into you?"

"It was the *Falcon,* a yacht owned by a Mr. Fenwick. His son and a man he called Bill Goss were aboard."

At this Martin Harris drew down his mouth. "A bad set, those. I know 'em well."

"And we know Fenwick, too," put in Dick. "He's a regular sneak."

"That's right—takes after his father, who did his best to defraud me in a boat deal. And that Bill Goss is a sneak, too, and worse," and Martin Harris shook his head decidedly.

"Well, we can't talk about those people now," said Dick. "We're in a mess and must get out of it the best way we can. As you are an old boatman, what would you advise us to do?"

"Come ashore with me and then get Dan Haskett to take your boat in charge and fix her up. He can stop that leak somehow and pump her out and have her all right inside of twenty-four hours."

"Where can we find this Haskett?"

"Come into my boat and I'll take you to him."

The rowboat was now close at hand, and one after another the Rover boys stowed themselves away in the craft. Then Martin Harris took up the oars and started for the river bank. He turned down the stream a bit and landed them at an old dock over which hung the sign: "Daniel Haskett, Boat Builder and Repairer. Jobs Promptly Attended to—Charges Small."

Dan Haskett proved to be an elderly man, who was somewhat deaf, and it took the boys some time to make him understand the situation.

"We've had a smash-up," began Dick.

"Cash up?" said the deaf man. "Cash up for what?"

"We've had a smash-up!" repeated the boy in a louder tone. "We want our boat mended."

"What's ended?" asked the boat builder. "Your boat?"

"Almost ended," roared Tom. "We—want you—to—fix—up—our—boat," he yelled.

"Oh, all right. Where is she?"

Dick pointed with his finger, and at once the boat builder understood. "There's a hole in her side," bawled the boy. "We want it patched up."

"All right; I can do that."

"Can we have her by to-morrow?"

"How's that?" And Dan Haskett placed his hand to his ear.

"Can—we—have—her—by—to-morrow?" yelled Dick.

"I guess so. I'll have to see how badly she is damaged first."

Haskett got out a small boat of his own and, taking Dick with him, rowed over to the wreck. He pronounced the injury small and said the boys could have their boat by noon the next day. The charges would be twelve or fifteen dollars.

"We'll be getting off cheaper than I thought,"

said Tom, on Dick's return. "But that money ought to come out of Mumps' pocket."

"That's so," added Sam. "By the way, I wonder what he meant by saying we were dogging him?"

"I can't say," replied Dick. "But I've been thinking that he can't be up to any good, or he wouldn't be so suspicious."

"Just exactly my idea!" burst out Tom. "Do you know what I half imagine?"

"Well?"

"That Mumps is cruising around waiting for Dan Baxter to join him."

"But Baxter went to Chicago."

"He won't stay there—not as long as his father is in the East. He will be back before long, if he isn't back already."

"But he took that money belonging to his father."

"What of that? His father can't do anything against him, for he himself is worse than his son, as we all know. Besides, his father is most likely still in the hospital."

"If you young gentlemen want to sail around until to-morrow noon I can take you out in one of my boats," remarked Martin Harris. "I've got a first-class yacht, the *Searchlight,* that I can let you have reasonably."

"Thanks, but I would just as lief stay on shore until our boat is mended," answered Dick. "But I want to pay you for what you did for us," he added.

"Oh, that's all right."

But the boys thought otherwise, and in the end gave Martin Harris two dollars, with which the boatman was highly pleased.

"Remember, I saw that accident," he said, on parting. "I can prove it was the *Falcon's* fault."

"We'll remember that," answered Dick.

From time to time they had watched the *Falcon's* course until the yacht had disappeared down the river.

After a short debate the brothers decided to put up at a hotel which stood not far away, on a high cliff overlooking the noble Hudson.

"We've been on the water for nearly two weeks now," said Dick, "and to sleep in a real bed will be something of a novelty."

As it was in the height of the summer season the hotel was crowded; but some guests were just departing, and they managed to get a fairly good room on the second floor. This had a double bed, and a cot was added, to accommodate Sam; Dick and Tom sleeping together, as usual.

It was supper time when the boys arrived, and as soon as they had registered and washed up and

combed their hair, they descended to the spacious dining room, where fully a score of tables were set.

"This way, please," said the head waiter, and showed them to a table at one side, overlooking one of the wide verandas of the hotel.

"I'm as hungry as a bear!" exclaimed Tom. "You can't serve us any too quick," he added, to the waiter who came up to take their orders.

"Yes, sah, do the best I can, sah," grinned the colored man. "What kind of soup, please?"

"I'll have ox-tail——" began Tom, when he happened to glance out of the window. As his gaze fell upon a man sitting in an easy chair on the veranda he uttered a low whistle. "By jinks, boys, look! Josiah Crabtree, as sure as you're born!" he whispered.

CHAPTER III.

JOSIAH CRABTREE FREES HIS MIND.

THE individual to whom Tom referred had been a former master at Putnam Hall, but his disagreeable ways had led to his dismissal by Captain Putnam.

Josiah Crabtree was a tall, slim individual, with a sharp face and a very long nose. During the past term at Putnam Hall he had been very dictatorial to the Rover boys, and it must be confessed that they had made life anything but a bed of roses for him. Crabtree had been very desirous of marrying a certain widow by the name of Stanhope, but the marriage was opposed by Dora, the widow's daughter, and as Dick was rather sweet on Dora he had done all he could to aid the girl in breaking off the match, even going so far as to send Crabtree a bogus letter which had taken the teacher out to Chicago on a hunt for a position in a private college that had never existed. Dick knew that Crabtree was compara-

tively poor and wished to marry the widow so that he could get his hands on the fortune which the lady held in trust for her only child.

"It is Crabtree," said Dick, as he gave a look.

"I wonder how he liked his trip to Chicago?" laughed Sam. "Perhaps the Mid-West National College didn't suit his lofty ideas."

"Hush! don't let him hear you talk of that," returned Dick. "He might get us into trouble."

"What kind of soup, sah?" interrupted the waiter, and then they broke off to give their order, and the waiter hurried off to fill it.

"I'd like to know if he has been around the Stanhope cottage again," mused Dick, as he sipped his soup.

"Dick can't bear to think of anybody around Dora," laughed Tom.

"I don't want *him* around," retorted the elder Rover, growing red in the face. "He wants the Stanhopes' money and that's all he does want. I don't believe he really loves Mrs. Stanhope."

"But why does she encourage him?" came from Sam. "Why don't she send him about his business?"

"Oh, she is sickly, as you know, and he seems to have a peculiar hypnotic influence over her—at least, that's what Dora thinks. If I—— What are you laughing at, Tom?"

"I—I—was thinking of the time we put the crabs in old Crabtree's bed," answered the younger brother.

"No, you weren't. You were——"

"Well?" demanded Tom, as Dick paused.

"You were laughing because I mentioned Dora, and——"

"'Pon my honor I wasn't," smiled Tom, but his look belied his words.

"You were. If I mention her cousins, Grace and Nellie Laning, I guess the laugh will be on you and Sam——"

"We'll call it quits," answered Tom hurriedly. "They're all nice girls, eh, Sam?"

"To be sure. But, I say, hadn't we best keep out of old Crabtree's way?"

"I don't know as it's necessary," said Dick. "I'm not afraid of him, I'm sure."

"Oh, neither am I, if you are going to put it that way," answered the youngest Rover.

"If he's stopping here I'm going to have some fun with him," grinned Tom.

The evening meal was soon finished, and the boys took a stroll around the grounds. They were just on the point of retiring when Dick drew his brothers' attention to a figure that was stealing through a nearby grove of trees.

"There goes Crabtree."

"I wonder where he is going," mused Sam. "Where does that path lead to?"

"Down to the river," came from Tom. And then he added suddenly: "Come, let us follow him."

"What's the good," grumbled Dick. "I'm tired out."

"There may be some chance for fun. Come on," and thus urged Dick and Sam followed their fun-loving brother.

The path through the grove ran directly to the cliff overlooking the Hudson, at a point where a series of stone steps led up from the water's edge. As they gained a spot where they could look down upon the river, Dick uttered a short cry.

"Look, boys, a yacht!" he said, pointing through the moonlight. "I'll wager it is the *Falcon!*"

"And Mumps is coming to meet Josiah Crabtree," put in Sam.

"But what would he want to see Crabtree about?" demanded Tom.

"That remains to be seen. Remember, at Putnam Hall the only friends Josiah Crabtree had were Dan Baxter and Mumps."

"That is true, Dick. See, Crabtree has his handkerchief out and is waving it as a signal."

"And here comes somebody up the steps. Mumps, sure enough," whispered Sam.

"Let us get behind the trees and learn what is going on," came from Dick, and the three brothers lost no time in secreting themselves in the immediate vicinity.

"Well, John, I've been waiting for you," said Josiah Crabtree, as Mumps came forward and the two shook hands.

"So have I been waiting for you," returned the former sneak of Putnam Hall. "Why didn't you come yesterday?"

"It was impossible to do so, my lad. Is that the *Falcon* down there?"

"It is."

"Who is in charge of her?"

"A sailor named Bill Goss."

"Is he a—ahem—a man to be trusted?"

"I guess I can trust him," snickered Mumps. "If he dared to give me away I could send him to jail."

"You mean that you—er—have him—ahem—in your power?"

"That's it, Mr. Crabtree."

"Very good. And is he a good sailor?"

"As good as any on the river."

"Then he can sail the yacht down the river without mishap?"

"He can take her to Florida, if you wish to go that far."

"No, I don't want to go that far—at least, not at present."

"Don't you think you ought to let me in on your little game," went on Mumps earnestly. "So far I'm in the dark."

"You will know all very soon, John—and you shall be well paid for what you do."

"That's all right. But if it isn't lawful——"

"I will protect you, never fear."

"Where is Dan Baxter?"

"Hush! It will be best not to mention his name, my lad."

"But where is he?"

"I cannot say exactly."

"Is he around Lake Cayuga?"

"Well—ahem—more than likely he is. To tell the truth, he is very anxious to see his father."

"To bone him for some more money?"

"I think not. Daniel thinks a great deal of his parent, and when Mr. Baxter was so seriously injured——"

"Dan didn't care much for that. He isn't that kind."

"Daniel is a better boy than you think, John. He loves his parent, and when that imp of a

Rover got Mr. Baxter into trouble Daniel was very much exercised over it."

"Gracious, but that's rich," murmured Dick. "*I* got him into trouble. I guess the rascal did that for himself."

"Well, we won't talk about that, professor," went on Mumps. "You didn't stay in Chicago long."

"No, I—ahem—the position offered to me did not suit my views, so I declined it."

"Gee-christopher!" came from Tom, and each of the Rovers could scarcely keep from laughing.

"I think those Rover boys put up a job on you," said Mumps. "At least, I got an inkling that way."

"Indeed. I would like to wring their necks, the imps!" burst out Josiah Crabtree. "Oh, what have I not suffered at their hands! At one hotel where I stopped they placed live crabs—— But let that pass—the subject is too painful. To come back to the point. I can have the *Falcon* at any time that I may need her?"

"Yes."

"And you will promise to say nothing to a soul about what is done on the trip I propose?"

"I will."

"Very good. You see, this is a—er—a delicate matter. I—ahem——"

"Are you going to marry Mrs. Stanhope and use the yacht for your honeymoon?" said Mumps somewhat slyly.

"Hardly—although that would not be a bad idea, my lad. But now I have a different deal on hand—something very much different. If you do not object I'll take a look at your yacht and interview this sailor you mention."

"All right, come ahead."

Mumps led the way down the rocky steps and Josiah Crabtree followed, moving slowly that he might not fall. Creeping to the edge of the cliff, the Rover boys saw the pair reach the *Falcon* and go on board.

"Now what is in the wind?" said Dick, as soon as the pair were out of hearing.

"That's a conundrum," replied Tom. "I'll wager one thing though—old Crabtree is up to no good."

"I believe you are right. I wish we could hear the rest of what is going on."

"Can't we get close to the yacht?" suggested Sam. "See, the sky is clouding over. I don't believe they will see us going down the stairs."

They talked the plan over for a moment, then began to descend the steps, keeping as low down as possible and close to some brush which grew up in the crevices of the stones. Soon the river

bank was gained at a point not over fifty feet from where the yacht lay.

They halted behind a large stone close to the water's edge. By straining their eyes in the darkness they saw Mumps, Crabtree, and Bill Goss in earnest conversation in the stern of the vessel. A low murmur came to their ears, but not a word could be understood.

"We must get closer," was Dick's comment, when to the surprise of all they saw the sailor hoist the mainsail of the *Falcon*. A gentle breeze was blowing, and soon the yacht was leaving the shore. They watched the craft until the gathering darkness hid her entirely from view.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DISASTROUS RESULT OF A TRICK.

"SHE's gone!"

"Yes; and I wonder where to, Tom?"

"I don't believe the yacht will go very far," said Sam. "Maybe old Crabtree merely wants to see what sort of a sailing craft she is."

"We can watch here for a while," returned Dick.

They sat down on a rock and waited, in the meantime discussing the strange situation. They could reach no conclusion but that Josiah Crabtree had some plot he wanted to put into execution. "And it's something underhand, too," was Dick's comment.

At last they grew tired of waiting and almost fell asleep. This being the case they returned to the hotel and made their way to the bedchamber. Soon each was sleeping soundly.

When they awoke the sun was shining brightly and it was half-past seven o'clock. "All up!" shouted Tom, and dragged Sam out by the foot. Soon they were dressed and made their way to the dining room.

They had scarcely seated themselves when Josiah Crabtree came in and was shown to a seat directly opposite the boys. He did not notice them at first and began to eat a dish of oatmeal silently and rapidly.

Tom nudged Sam, and the younger Rover nudged his oldest brother, and a snicker went up. At this Josiah Crabtree glanced at them carelessly. Then he started back in amazement.

"Why—er—why—ahem—so it is you!" he stammered. "I—er—where did you come from?"

"We came from our bedroom," answered Tom promptly. "Where did you come from, Mr. Crabtree?"

"Why—er—don't be impertinent, Rover. I might say that I came from my bedroom too."

"I thought you came from the river," remarked Dick carelessly.

"From the river?"

"Yes."

"You are—ahem, mistaken, my lad. I have not been near the river—at least, not since I came up from New York on the boat."

"Stopping here for the summer?" put in Sam.

"I do not know as that is any of your business, Samuel. I am no longer a master at Putnam Hall, and when I left that place I washed

my hands of all those who were connected with the place."

"A good thing for the Hall, sir," came from Tom.

"Don't be insulting, Rover. You go your way and I'll go mine."

"As you please, sir. You spoke to us first."

"I'll take good care and not do it again. But this looks as if you were following me up."

"That's what Mumps said," cried Sam, before he had stopped to think twice.

"Ha! So you have met Mum—I mean John Fenwick?"

"We met him on the river."

"And he said you had been following him?"

"Never mind, Mr. Crabtree, we won't talk any more," put in Dick, with a warning glance at Sam. He turned to the waiter. "Some fish, please, trout; and see that the biscuits are warm."

"Yes, sah," grinned the negro.

Tom at once took the cue. "It's going to be a warm day," he said to Dick.

"I wonder how sailing was last night," put in Sam slyly.

At this Josiah Crabtree looked as black as a thundercloud.

"You boys have been playing the sneak on

me!" he cried. "Take my advice and beware of what you do in the future."

"I wasn't talking to you," retorted Sam. "Kindly keep your remarks to yourself."

By this time others were coming to the table, consequently the cross-fire of words had to come to an end. Josiah Crabtree finished his repast as speedily as possible and strode out of the dining room in high but suppressed anger.

"He's a corker," remarked Tom. "I believe he'd half kill us if he dared."

"I guess he hasn't forgotten how I stopped him from maltreating Dora Stanhope," said Dick. "I wish I knew if he had been around their place since he came back from the West."

"Of course he has been back," said Tom. "And he'll marry Mrs. Stanhope yet—see if he don't."

"Not if I can help Dora prevent it," said his elder brother firmly.

Breakfast finished they walked out to learn what had become of Crabtree. They were just in time to see him leaving the hotel, valise in hand.

"He's off," said Tom. "I wonder where he is bound?"

"Let us follow him and find out," returned Dick.

This did not prove to be an easy matter, for at the foot of the hotel grounds Josiah Crabtree jumped into a stage which was in waiting, bound for the depot.

"He's off on the train, I guess," said Sam, and the others were inclined to agree with him.

Down at the river shore nothing could be seen of the *Falcon,* and they concluded that Mumps had also taken himself off.

The morning was spent around the hotel, in reading the newspapers and in taking it easy out on the beautiful lawn.

"Hullo, here's a novelty!" cried Tom presently, and pointed to an Italian who was coming up to the hotel. The fellow had a small hand-organ and a trained bear and two monkeys. The monkeys were dressed in red, white, and blue, and sat on the bear's back as he trotted along.

"He's going to give us a performance," said Sam, as the Italian came to a halt in the center of the grounds. "There they go!"

The music started, and at once the bear reared himself on his hind legs and began to dance. In the meantime the monkeys climbed to the bear's head and began a little dance of their own.

"Now for a little sport," whispered Tom, and started for the hotel.

"Be careful of yourself!" warned Dick.

"That bear looks as if he wasn't to be trifled with."

But Tom did not heed him, his whole mind being bent on having a laugh at the expense of the Italian and his animals. Going around to the kitchen of the hotel, he procured a couple of sugar cakes, pierced them with pinholes, and filled them up with pepper.

When he returned he found that a crowd had gathered and the Italian was passing around the hat. While Sam and Dick contributed several cents, Tom gave the bear one bun and divided the other between the two monkeys.

"Cheep! cheep!" went the monkeys, as if highly pleased.

"You're right, they are cheap," grinned Tom. "Hope you like the flavor."

The monkeys began to eat ravenously, for they were nearly starved. But they had not swallowed many mouthfuls before they noticed something wrong. Then one threw his bun at Tom in a rage. A second later the other monkey leaped back on the bear's head and began to dance and scratch wildly, in the meanwhile scattering the bun crumbs in all directions.

"Hi! hi! whata you do to de monks?" demanded the Italian. "You letta de monks alone!"

"I'm not touching the monks," replied Tom, and slipped out of sight in the crowd.

By this time the bear had swallowed the larger portion of the bun given to him. It was the more peppery of the two, and it brought tears to the beast's eyes. With a roar of rage he turned and shook the monkey from his head and leaped away from his keeper, dragging his chain after him.

The monkeys were evidently not used to seeing the bear in an ugly mood, and at once they sought safety by getting out of his reach. One leaped into a tree and ran like a cat to the top, while the second pounced on the shoulder of an elderly damsel, who looked exactly what she was, a hot-tempered old maid.

"Oh, dear!" screamed the elderly damsel. "Take the horrid thing off! Take it off this minute!"

"Come here, Jocko!" roared the Italian. "Come, Jocko!" and he held out his hands.

But Jocko had no intention of coming. Instead he clung the closer, his two forefeet in the lady's hair. The hair was largely false, and of a sudden a long switch came loose and fell to the ground.

At this the damsel screeched at the top of her lungs and caught at the hair. The monkey cried,

too, in concert, and then a young man rushed in to the rescue. But Jocko's blood was up, and, leaping to the young man's shoulder, he tore off his straw hat and began to pull it to bits. Then, with the hat still in his possession, he made a leap to the tree and joined his brother at the top.

By this time the uproar was general, and it seemed to anger the bear still more. He had been rushing over the lawn, upsetting easy chairs and benches, but now he charged straight for the crowd.

"Look out for the bear!"

"The beast is going mad and will chew somebody up!"

"Shoot him, somebody, before we are all killed!"

Such were some of the cries which rang out. The Italian turned pale with anger and alarm.

"No shootta Marcus!" he cried. "No shootta heem. He de goodda bear!"

"Then catch him!" put in the proprietor of the hotel. "Catch him and tie him up."

But this the Italian could not do, and when the bear headed for him he ran as hard as anybody present. Around and around the grounds flew the people, some rushing for the hotel and the others to the stables and to a large summer house. The bear made first for one and then

another, but at last halted in front of the stable, which now contained the Rover boys, two ladies and an elderly man, and two colored hostlers.

"Shut the doors!" cried Dick, but his words were unnecessary, for the colored men were already closing them. The bar had scarcely been dropped into place when the bear hurled himself with all force against the barrier.

"He is going to break in the door!" cried one of the ladies.

"Let us go upstairs," said the elderly gentleman, and lost no time in leading the way.

There was a back door to close, and one of the negroes started for this.

But just as he got close to the door he saw the bear coming, and, uttering a wild yell, he too made for the stairs.

Tom was close at hand, and it must be confessed that he felt thoroughly sorry over what he had done. "I'm responsible for all of it," he groaned. Then, as the bear stepped close to the back door, he got behind the barrier and tried to shove it shut.

The result was a surprise for both boy and bear, for as the beast made a leap the edge of the door caught him, and in a twinkle the animal was held fast by the neck between the door and its frame!

CHAPTER V.

A NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN SWIM.

"I've got him fast! Help! help!"

"Tom's caught the bear!" shouted Sam. "Can you hold him, Tom?"

"I guess I can if some of you will help me!" panted the youth. "Hurry up!"

Sam and Dick were on the stairs, but now both ran to their brother's assistance, and all three pushed upon the door with all of their strength.

The barrier groaned and creaked and it looked as if at any instant it would burst from its hinges.

"Gracious, we can't hold him very long!" gasped Sam. "Can't somebody hit the animal with a club?"

"I reckon I can do dat!" shouted one of the hostlers, and caught up an ax-handle which stood in one corner. As he approached the bear the beast uttered a roar of commingled rage and fear, and this was so terrorizing to the colored man that he dropped the ax-handle and ran for his very life.

"Come back here!" cried Tom.

"Can't do it, boss; he's gwine ter chew me up!" howled the hostler.

"Hold the door—I'll hit him," put in Sam, and picked up the ax-handle. Stepping forward, he struck out heavily, and the bear dropped in a heap, completely dazed and more than half choked to death.

By this time the Italian was again at hand. In one pocket he carried a thin but strong line, and in a twinkle he had tied one fore and one hind leg together, so that the bear, when he got up again, could do little but hobble along. Then from another pocket he drew a leather muzzle, which he buckled over the beast's head. But the bear had had all of the ugliness knocked out of him and was once more as docile as ever.

"Tom," whispered Dick. "I guess the best thing we can do is to get out of this place. If the folks discover the trick you played they'll mob you."

"I guess you're right. But who'll settle our bill?"

"I'll do that," said Sam. "They know I wasn't near the bear when the rumpus started."

So it was agreed, and while Tom and Dick left the hotel grounds Sam strolled into the office to pay their bill. It was some time before the clerk came to wait on him.

"Say, I believe your brother started this kick-up," observed the clerk.

"What?" demanded Sam, in pretended astonishment.

"I say, I think he started this kick-up."

"What kick-up?"

"The one with the bear, of course."

"Why, my brothers helped to catch the beast."

"I know that; but one of 'em started it. What do you want?"

"Want to pay our bill. How much is it?"

"Going to leave?"

"Yes."

"Think you had better, eh?"

"We only hired our room until this noon." Sam drew himself up. "If you want your pay you be civil."

"Yes, but——" The clerk broke off short. "Six dollars, please."

"All right, there you are," and Sam shoved the bills over. "Now don't say we created a muss or I'll report you to the proprietor."

"Yes, but see here——"

"I've not got my glasses just now. Good-by, and——"

"That man hasn't got his monkeys yet, and——"

"What's that to you? Are you afraid the proprietor will put one of 'em in here in your place?" And before the clerk could say another

word Sam ran off and joined his brothers at the river bank.

Soon the three reached the dock where the *Spray* lay undergoing repairs. The deaf man was just finishing his work.

"She'll be about as good as ever," he said, in reply to Dick's question. "She's a fine boat."

"I guess he says that of every boat that brings him in a job," murmured Sam. "Come on."

He went aboard and the others followed. Dan Haskett was paid off, the mainsail was hoisted, and once more they stood up the river in the direction of the State capital. It was their intention to spend two days in Albany and then return to New York with the yacht. This would wind up their vacation, for Putnam Hall was to open on the following Monday.

The day proved an ideal one, but the wind was light and the yacht scarcely moved even with the mainsail and jib set to their fullest. This being so, the boys got out their fishing lines and spent an hour in trolling, and succeeded in catching several fair-sized fish.

"We'll have to cook our own dinner," remarked Dick. "Tom, since you did us out of our meal at the hotel I reckon you are the one to fall in for this work."

At this Tom cut a wry face, but still, seeing

the justice of his elder brother's remark, he went at the dinner-getting with a will. The yacht boasted a kerosene stove, and over this he set fish to frying and a pot of potatoes to boiling. As the river was calm and the yacht steady the little stove worked very well.

They were still out of sight of Albany when the midday meal was pronounced ready. In addition to the articles already mentioned, they had coffee, bread and butter, and what was left of a cocoanut pie purchased the day previous. The boys were all hearty eaters, and the food disappeared as if by magic.

After dinner the breeze died out utterly, and Sam proposed that they cast anchor close to shore and take a swim. The others were willing, and soon they had disrobed and donned their bathing trunks and were sporting in the water to their hearts' content.

The water was somewhat colder than they had anticipated, and the effect upon Sam was disastrous. The youngest Rover had eaten more heartily than either of his brothers and this made him sick at the stomach. However, as he did not wish to alarm Dick and Tom and so spoil their fun, he said nothing about his condition.

"Let us race each other," suggested Tom, and started off up the shore, with Dick close beside

him. Sam brought up in the rear, but soon gave up the contest.

"Help!" The single cry reached the ears of Tom and Dick when they were fully a hundred feet from the *Spray*. Both turned just in time to behold Sam throw up his arms and sink from view.

"Great Cæsar!" burst out Dick. "What can that mean?"

"Maybe he is only fooling," replied Tom. "Yet I wouldn't think he would be so foolish."

"I don't think Sam is fooling," said Dick seriously, and at once struck out to where the youngest Rover had gone down. Of course Tom went with him.

To reach the spot was not an easy matter, and they were still some distance away when they saw Sam come up again. Then there was a wild circling of arms and the boy disappeared once more.

"He is drowning!" gasped Dick hoarsely. "Come, we must save him, Tom!"

"Yes, yes," was the puffing answer, for Tom was swimming as never before, and for a brief instant he remembered that awful adventure Sam had had at Humpback Falls, the summer previous. At that time the youngest Rover had nearly lost his life in the water.

It was Dick who gained the spot first, just as

Sam came up and went down again—totally unconscious. Diving, the elder Rover caught his brother around the chest, under the arms.

"Sam, Sam, what is it?" he questioned, and as no reply came back his heart almost stopped beating. What if his brother was dead? The agony of the thought was terrible beyond description.

"Can I help you?" The question came from Tom, who was now at the side of the others.

"Catch hold of one arm, if you will," answered Dick. "He's a dead weight."

"Oh!" The moan came so unexpectedly that both Tom and Dick were amazed. Then of a sudden Sam opened his eyes and clutched Dick by the throat. "Save me!"

Clearly the youngest Rover was out of his mind or he would not have taken such a hold. As it was, Dick was nearly strangled and had to unlock the fingers by sheer force. Then Sam grabbed him again, and it looked as if both would go down to a watery grave.

But now Tom came to the rescue. Swimming up from behind, he caught Sam first under one arm and then under the other, in a back-to-back fashion. Then he bent forward and began to tread water, thus holding his brother's head well out of water.

"Push us ashore, Dick!" he panted, and understanding the movement perfectly, the elder brother did as desired. Soon all three gained a point from which Tom could wade to the river bank with ease.

It was an anxious pair that bent over Sam, who rested on his back with his eyes closed. But the youngest Rover was not allowed to remain long in that position. Tom and Dick knew something of how to handle a person who is nearly drowned, and they now made use of this knowledge with all speed. Sam was rolled, and hoisted up by the ankles, and thus he got rid of a large quantity of the water he had swallowed.

Yet even when he came to his senses he was too weak to walk, and Tom had to bring the *Spray* close to shore, and the sufferer had to be carried on board, his brothers wading up to their waists for that purpose.

"The first cramp I got was in the stomach," said Sam, when he could talk. "Then it went all over me like an electric shock, and I felt I was going to drown. What happened after that was like some awful dream!" And he shuddered. It was a long while before any of them got over that adventure.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

As just related, the boys had brought the *Spray* as closely inshore as possible. All were now in the cabin, Dick and Tom attending to Sam's wants; and consequently no one noticed the passage of one of the palatial steamers that make daily trips between New York and the capital of the State.

These steamers, in running so fast, cast out long rollers on both sides, that go tumbling shoreward one after another. The rollers now caught the *Spray* and sent her dancing up and down like a cork.

"Hullo, we're in danger!" shouted Tom, and rushed for the deck, with Dick almost at his heels. The anchor was dragging, and unless pushed off the yacht would soon be pounding on the rocks.

"I'll put up the sail!" roared Dick. "You bring up the anchor!"

"I guess you had better pole her off," replied Tom. Nevertheless, he did as Dick requested, working like a beaver.

The wind was still faint, and when the mainsail was hoisted it failed to fill. Seeing this, Dick seized a pole and Tom did the same.

They speedily found that they could not send the yacht out any distance. But, with a pole at the bow and another at the stern, they managed to keep her off the rocks until the rollers began to go down. Then they shoved off with ease and moved slowly up the river.

"I'll tell you what, in handling a boat you have got to have your weather eye open all the time," observed Tom.

"Yes, and you want to have it open on all sides of you," smiled Dick. "If you don't, you'll catch it before you are aware."

Sam lay on one of the tiny berths with which the *Spray* was provided. His face was deathly white, and, to use his own words, he felt "as weak as a rag."

"I'm just beginning to realize how close to death I was," he whispered to Tom. "It was awfully good of you and Dick to do what you did."

"Pooh! you would do just as much for us, Sam," answered the fun-loving brother. But,

just the same, he gave Sam's hand a tight squeeze on the quiet.

"What was that thumping, Tom?" asked the younger brother a bit later.

"The rollers from a big steamer nearly put us on the rocks."

"Gracious, more perils! Don't you think we had better give up our outing on the water?"

"It will come to an end in a few days, Sam. We'll make the trip to Albany, and that will be the last of it."

It was nightfall by the time they came up to the capital city. Getting the necessary permission to tie up at one of the private wharves, they locked up the cabin of the *Spray* and went ashore.

"Tom Rover, as I live! And Dick and Sam, too!"

The cry came from up the street, and soon a boy of Dick's age was running to meet them. It was Frank Harrington, their old school chum and room-mate of Dormitory No. 6.

"Frank!" came from the three, and a general handshaking followed.

"What brings you here?" asked Dick.

"Why, don't you know, my folks moved up to Albany from New York—father's in the State Senate now, you know," returned Frank, with pride.

"Oh, that's so—and you are a senator's son," put in Tom. "I guess we'll have to tip our hats to you after this and call you Mr. Harri——"

"Stow it, Tom, and keep your jokes until school opens," interrupted Frank. "Yes, we live here, and I thought you knew all about it. I sent you a letter."

"We've been away from home for several weeks," explained Dick, and told of their outing on the water.

"It must be jolly. My father owns a boat, but we seldom use it. So you are going to stay in Albany over to-morrow? If that's the case you must come up to our house. I won't hear of your going to a hotel."

"Will that arrangement suit your folks?" questioned Dick.

"Oh, yes! The girls are all away—down to Asbury Park—and so is mother; and father and I and the servants have the whole mansion to ourselves. I can tell you, it's just a bit lonely at times, and I'm real glad you came," concluded Frank.

"If your father is a senator perhaps you can get us a pass through the Capitol building," put in Sam.

"You won't need a pass. I'll go with you. But, Sam, you look sick."

Sam's tale had to be told to Frank, who, meanwhile, led the way to a street car. Boarding this, the boys soon reached the Harrington mansion, located on one of Albany's finest thoroughfares. Here they met Senator Harrington and were speedily introduced.

"I've heard of you before," smiled the senator. He was a pleasant-looking man of forty-five. "Frank says the Rover boys were the whole school—or something like that."

At this there was a laugh. "I guess he must have been one of the Rovers, then," rejoined Tom; "he was just as good as any of us;" and then there was another laugh, and the newcomers felt perfectly at home.

There was a concert company in town, and, receiving permission from his father to do so, Frank took his friends to see the performance. The singing was very good; and, despite the fact that it was still warm weather, the concert hall was packed.

The programme was a long one, and, with the numerous encores, did not come to an end until nearly eleven o'clock.

"That was immense," remarked Tom, when they were coming out. "I wish I could sing like that tenor."

"We ought to get up a quartet at the Hall,"

put in Frank. "I understand they had a singing club year before last."

"We're going to have a banjo club," said Dick. "Larry Colby wrote to me about it. He has a new banjo that cost fifteen dollars, and he——"

Dick broke off short as a slouchy-looking man brushed against him. The eyes of the man and the boy met, and then the man disappeared in the crowd as if by magic.

"Well, I never!"

"What's the matter, Dick?" came from all the others.

"Didn't you see him?"

"See who?"

"Buddy Girk, the tramp thief, the fellow who used to train with Dan Baxter's father."

"What, the fellow who stole your watch and broke jail at Rootville?" came from Tom.

"The same."

"Where is he now?" questioned Sam.

"I don't know. The instant he saw me he skipped."

"I'll wager he wasn't in the crowd for any good purpose," went on Dick, as he remembered how he had suffered the loss of his timepiece at Buddy Girk's hands. Dick had had a good deal of trouble in recovering the article.

"He ought to be pointed out to the police," put

in Frank. "It's not safe to have such men at large."

"I wish I could collar him and make him talk about father's affairs," grumbled Tom.

"Why, did he know anything of your father's affairs?" exclaimed Frank Harrington, in astonishment.

"I think so. You see, Arnold Baxter tried to defraud my father out of some western mining property, and this Buddy Girk was mixed up in the affair—how, I don't exactly know."

"I see. By the way, Tom, have you heard anything of your father yet?"

"Not a word," and Tom's face grew sober. "It does beat all what has become of him, doesn't it?" he added.

"I should think you would want to go and hunt him up."

"We've talked about that already, but Uncle Randolph, who is our guardian, thinks it would prove a wild-goose chase. He says the interior of Africa is a big place to hunt any man in."

"He's right there. But still I would want to hunt for him, even if I had to go into the very jungles to do it."

"We'll go some day—unless father turns up," put in Dick decidedly. "If Uncle Randolph won't go, we'll go alone. But I would like to

meet this Buddy Girk," he continued, after a brief pause.

The boys had to walk to the corner of the block to get aboard of a street car, and while waiting there, somewhat in the shadow, Sam pulled Dick by the coat sleeve.

"There he goes!"

"Who?"

"Buddy Girk. See him sneaking along the buildings over there?" and the youngest Rover pointed with his hand.

All saw the figure, and Tom at once proposed that they follow the fellow. Frank was willing, and away they went across the street and also into the gloom.

Buddy Girk was making good time, past a number of business buildings which at this hour of the night were locked and barred up and practically deserted.

"I wonder if he saw us start to follow him?" whispered Dick, after several blocks had been passed.

"I don't think so. If he had, it's more than likely that he would have legged it to get away. He—hullo, he's going into that alleyway!"

As Tom spoke he pointed to an opening between two tall office buildings. Reaching the spot they saw, at the foot of the alleyway, a couple

of tenement houses. Buddy Girk was ascending the steps of one of the houses, and presently he disappeared within the dark hall.

"He must be stopping here," remarked Sam. "That is something worth knowing—if we want to put the police on his track."

"I might have him arrested at once," suggested Dick. "He may not be here in the morning."

"Why don't you go and have a talk with him?" came from Frank. "He may get scared and tell you all you want to know about that mining business."

"By jinks, there is something in that!" cried Dick.

"Don't you get into trouble," warned Tom. "He may prove an ugly customer if you corner him."

"Let's all go in," said Sam. "He won't dare to do much with four against him."

The subject was discussed for a few minutes, and they resolved to follow Sam's advice, Dick to lead the way and learn just how the land lay.

Then all walked down the alleyway and toward the tenement, little dreaming of the surprise in store for them.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK IS MADE A PRISONER.

THE hallway of the tenement was pitch-dark, the door standing open for a foot or more.

From a rear room came a thin stream of light under a door and a low murmur of voices.

"I guess he went to the rear," whispered Dick. "You wait around the corner till I see."

Noiselessly he entered the hallway and walked to the door of the rear room.

Listening, he heard an Irishman and his wife talking over some factory work the man had been promised.

"Girk can't be there," he thought, when he heard an upper door open.

"Hullo, Buddy, back again!" muttered a strangely familiar voice, and then the upper door was closed and locked.

Wondering where he had heard that voice before, Dick came forward again and ascended the rickety stairs. They creaked dismally, and he fully expected to see somebody come out and demand what was going on. But nobody came, and soon the upper hall was gained, and he

reached the door which he rightfully guessed had just been opened and closed.

"Yes, everything is all O. K.," were the first words to reach his ears. "But I had a sweet job to find Mooney. He's cracked on music, it seems, and had gone to a concert instead of attending to business."

"But he won't fail us to-morrow morning?" came in a second voice, and now Dick recognized the speaker as Arnold Baxter, his father's worst enemy, who had been left at the hospital in Ithaca with a broken limb and several smashed ribs. Baxter had tackled Dick while the two were on a moving train, and, while trying to throw the boy off, had gotten the worst of the encounter by tumbling off himself.

"Arnold Baxter! is it possible!" muttered Dick to himself. "He must have a constitution like iron to get around so soon."

"No, Mooney won't fail us," said Buddy Girk. "I gave him a mighty good talkin' to, I did."

"I can't afford to have him go back on us," growled Arnold Baxter. "I'm not well enough yet to do this job alone."

"How does your chest feel?"

"Oh, the ribs seem to be all right. But my leg isn't. I shouldn't wonder but what I'll have to limp more or less for the rest of my life."

"That puts me in mind. Whom do you reckon I clapped eyes on down at the concert hall to-night?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Any of our enemies?"

"Those three Rover boys."

"What!" Arnold Baxter pushed back his chair in amazement. "Can they be—be following me?" he gasped.

"No. I saw 'em by accident. They had been to the concert."

"But they don't belong here. They live on a farm called Valley Brook, near the village of Dexter's Corners."

"They were with another boy—a well-dressed chap. Maybe they are paying him a visit."

Arnold Baxter shook his head. "I don't like this. If they have got wind of anything——"

"But how could they get wind?" persisted Buddy Girk.

"That would remain to be found out. You must remember, Buddy, that they are down on me because of that row I once had with their father over that gold mine."

"I know it. And, by the way, I never got nothin' out of that deal neither," growled Buddy Girk.

"Didn't I tell you that some papers were miss-

ing? I half believe Anderson Rover took them with him when he set out for Africa."

"Then they are gone for good."

"Not if he comes back, Buddy. That man is like his boys—bound to turn up when you least expect it. That gold mine was—— What's that?"

Arnold Baxter stopped short and leaped to his feet. A wrangle in the hallway just outside of the door had interrupted him.

"Vot vos you doin' here, hey?" came in a heavy German voice. "I dink me you vos up to no goot, hey?"

"Let me go!" came from Dick. "I have done no harm."

"I dink you vos von sneak thief alretty! Stand still bis I find owit."

"It's Dutch Jake!" cried Buddy Girk. "He has collared somebody in the hall. I'll see who it is."

He threw open the door and allowed the light of a lamp to fall on Dick and the burly man who had captured the youth.

"Great smoke! It's one of dem Rover boys!" he cried, dropping into his old-time manner of speech. "Wot are you doin' here?"

"You know dot young feller?" demanded the man who had been mentioned as Dutch Jake.

"Yes, I do, and he's up to no good here," replied Buddy Girk.

"Den maybe I best kick him owit kvick, hey?"

"Yes—no—wait a minute." Girk turned to Arnold Baxter. "Here is that oldest Rover boy spying on us."

"Ha! I told you they were regular rats for that sort of work," fumed Arnold Baxter. "Don't let him go."

"Why not?"

"He may know too much. Bring him in here till I question him."

"Not much!" burst out Dick. "Help! hel——"

His cries came to a sudden ending as Buddy Girk clapped a large and somewhat dirty hand over his mouth.

"Run him in here, Jake," said the former tramp. "He is a fellow we have an account to settle with."

"Is dot so? Vell, I ton't vont me no troubles," answered the German doubtfully.

"It's all right—he—he stole some of our money. That's right, in with him," and Dick was run into the room, after which Dutch Jake retired as suddenly as he had appeared. He was an elderly man, of a queer turn of mind, and,

all by himself, occupied a garret room of the tenement.

As soon as the door was locked Arnold Baxter faced Dick. "Now will you keep quiet, or shall I knock you over with this?" he demanded, and raised a heavy cane he had grown into the habit of carrying since he had escaped from the hospital, on the very day that the authorities were going to transfer him to the jail at Ithaca.

"Don't you dare to touch me, Arnold Baxter!" cried the boy boldly.

"Will you keep quiet?"

"That depends. What do you want of me?"

"You followed Girk to this place and were spying on us."

"I think I had a right to follow Girk. He is wanted by the authorities, as you know."

"You heard us planning to do something."

"Perhaps I did."

"I know you did."

"All right, then; don't ask me about it."

"You think that you are a smart boy," growled Baxter uneasily.

"Thank you for nothing."

"Don't get impudent."

"That is what old Crabtree used to say."

"The Rovers always were too important for their own good, young man."

"We know how to do the fair thing by others —and that is more than you——"

"Shut up; I'm in no humor to listen to your preaching."

"Then open the door and let me go."

"Not just yet. I want to know how much you overheard of my talk with Buddy Girk."

"I reckon he heard all of it," growled the tool. "If I was you, Baxter, I wouldn't let him go at all."

"You would keep him a prisoner?"

Buddy Girk nodded.

"But we can't guard him, Buddy."

"We won't want to guard him. Just bind him hands and feet, and stuff a gag in his mouth, and there you are."

"Would you leave him in this room?"

"I don't know." Girk scratched his tangled head of hair. "No, I wouldn't. I'll tell you where to take him."

He finished by whispering into Arnold Baxter's ear. At once the rascal's face brightened, and he nodded. "Just the thing!" he muttered. "It will serve him right."

"Are you going to let me go?" demanded Dick uneasily, for he saw that the two men were plotting to do him injury.

"No," came from both.

Without another word Dick leaped for the door. The key was in the lock, but ere he could turn it Buddy Girk hauled him back. A scuffle followed, which came to a sudden termination when Arnold Baxter raised his heavy cane and struck the boy on the back of the head. With a million stars dancing before his eyes, poor Dick went down completely dazed.

Girk lost no time in following up the advantage thus gained, and by the time Dick felt like rising he found his hands bound behind him and a gag of knotted cloth stuffed into his mouth. Then his feet were fastened together, and he was rolled up in an old blanket much the worse for wear and the want of washing.

"Now, come on, before anybody else spots us!" exclaimed Baxter. "If you can lift him alone I'll bring the light. I'm no good on the carry yet."

"All right, light the way," answered Buddy Girk, and took up the form of the boy.

Taking up the smoky lamp, Arnold Baxter led the way out of a rear door to a side hallway. Here two flights of stairs led to a low and ill-ventilated cellar. The underground apartment had never been used for anything but old rubbish, and this was piled high on all sides.

"Here we are," said Baxter, as he paused in

front of what had once been a stone coal bin. "Dump him in there and shut the door on him. I don't believe he'll get out in any hurry."

Dick's form was dropped on a heap of dirty newspapers and straw. Then Girk and Baxter left the bin. There was a heavy door to the place, and this they closed and shoved the rusty bolt into the socket. In a second more they were on their way upstairs again, and Dick was left to his fate.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SEARCH FOR DICK.

"DICK is taking his time, that's certain."

The remark came from Sam, after the boys who had been left in the alleyway had waited the best part of half an hour for the elder Rover's reappearance.

"Perhaps he has found something of interest," suggested Frank.

"And perhaps he has fallen into a trap," put in Tom. "I've a good mind to hunt him up."

"If you go I'll go with you," said Sam.

"I don't want to be left out here alone," said Frank. "Let us wait a little longer."

The best part of an hour passed, but of course nothing was seen or heard of Dick.

"I shan't wait any longer," began Tom, when they saw the front door of the tenement opened and two men hurried forth. Both had their hats pulled far down over their eyes and had their coat collars turned up, even though the night was warm.

"Out of sight!" cried Sam in a low voice, and

they dropped down behind the stoop of the second tenement.

"One of those men was Buddy Girk!" ejaculated Tom, when the pair had passed up the alleyway.

"And don't you know who the other was?" demanded Sam. "It was Dan Baxter's father!"

"Impossible, Sam. Arnold Baxter is in the hospital, and——"

"It was Dan Baxter's father, as true as I'm born, Tom. No wonder he walked with a cane! Am I not right, Frank?"

"I don't know, I'm sure—I don't remember Dan's father. But that was Buddy Girk, beyond a doubt."

All of the boys were considerably excited and wondered if it would be best to follow up the vanishing pair.

"I'd do it if I was certain Dick was safe!" cried Tom. "I'm going to hunt for him," he added, and before the others could stop him he entered the tenement. He stumbled around the lower hallway for several minutes and then called out softly:

"Dick! Dick! Where are you?"

No answer came back, and he continued his search. Then, lighting a match, he mounted the rickety stairs and called out again.

"Phat are ye a-raisin' such a row about?" demanded an Irish voice suddenly, and a front-room door was thrown open. "Can't ye let a dasent family slape?"

"I'm looking for my brother," replied Tom. "Sorry to disturb you. Have you seen anything of him?"

"Sure an' I don't know yer brother from the side av sole leather, b'y. Go 'long an' let me an' me family slape," replied the Irishman.

"I've got to find my brother, sir. I'm afraid he has met with foul play. He came to see the men who just went out."

"Oh, is that so now? Foul play, is it? I thought thim newcomers was up to no good. I heard 'em carryin' on in their room a while ago."

"Which room is it, please?"

"There ye are—the wan on the lift. Is the dure open?"

Tom tried the door. "No, it's locked—the two men just went out." He raised his voice. "Dick! Where are you? Dick!"

"If yez call like that yez will have the whole tiniment aroused," said the Irishman. "An' it's a bad crowd on the nixt flure, I kin tell ye that."

"I can't help it—I am bound to find my brother," replied Tom desperately.

Disappearing for a moment, the Irishman came

out half dressed and with a lighted candle in his hand. By this time Sam and Frank had followed Tom to the upper floor. Soon several men and women put in an appearance, including Dutch Jake.

"Who vos dot poy you vos look for?" asked the aged German. "Vos he der von vot was standin' by dis door apout an hour ago?"

"I guess so," said Tom.

"Dem mans vot got dis room open der door und took him inside."

"Took him inside!" burst out Sam and Tom simultaneously.

"Yah," replied Dutch Jake, but failed to add that he had had anything to do with the capture. "Von of dem say dot poy vos stole some money alretty."

"It was a cock-and-bull story to make him a prisoner," said Tom. "I'm going to find him—if I can," and he threw himself on the door with all of his strength. At first the barrier refused to budge, but when Sam and Frank also pushed, it gave way with a bang, hurling the trio to the floor inside.

By this time the excitement had been communicated to the next tenement in which lived Caleb Yates, the landlord of the two buildings. Yates, a sour-minded old man, lost no time in

dressing and coming over, armed with a night-stick.

"What does this disturbance mean?" he demanded in a high-pitched voice. "Who broke this door in?"

"We did," replied Tom boldly. "We want to find my brother," and he related how Dick had disappeared.

"I know nothing of your trouble with my tenants," said Caleb Yates. "But I won't have my property destroyed."

"I'm going to find my brother if I have to turn the house upside down."

"And I am going to find him, too," put in Sam. "Do you know that the men who have this room are thieves, and that one of them broke jail at Rootville?"

"I don't believe your yarn, boy—they looked like very respectable gentlemen, both of them. You had better go about your business—after you have paid me for breaking down the door. You shan't ransack their property."

"If you stop us I'll call in the police and have you arrested," came promptly from Tom.

This threat nearly took away Caleb Yates' breath. "Arrested!" he gasped.

"Yes, arrested. My brother came in here, and is missing. Those two men are our enemies. If

you want to keep out of trouble you will help us to hunt up my brother."

"That is just what you had better do, sir," added Frank.

"And who are you?" demanded the irate landlord.

"I am Frank Harrington, son of Senator Harrington."

At this unexpected announcement the jaw of the landlord dropped perceptibly. "Why—er—I didn't know you were Senator Harrington's son," he stammered.

"I think if you wish to keep out of trouble you had best aid us all you can. The young man we are after came in here a short while ago and has utterly disappeared. I am afraid he has met with foul play."

"But Mr. Arson and Mr. Noble are gone."

"Is that the names they were known under?"

"Yes."

"Their right names are Girk and Baxter. They left the building just before we came up."

"What was your brother doing here?" asked Caleb Yates in a calmer tone.

"He was not my brother, but my warmest friend. He was tracking the short man, the fellow whose name is Girk. Girk once robbed him of his watch."

"I see. And you are sure of your men? If you are, search away, for I want no shady characters in these houses."

The search began immediately, several of the inmates of the tenements taking part. Everything in the room Girk and Baxter had occupied was turned topsy-turvy, but no trace of Dick was brought to light until Tom looked under the table.

"Here's his pocket-knife!" he cried, and held the article up. "This proves that he came in here beyond a doubt."

"Yes; but where is he now?" put in Sam. "They couldn't have spirited him away."

"He can't be far off," said Frank.

Again was the search renewed. The men had had one large room and one small apartment, where were located a dilapidated bed and a small writing table. On the table lay some writing material and several scraps of paper, but they were of no value.

The search through the rooms and hallways of the tenement lasted fully an hour. By this time the tenants who had gathered began to grow sleepy again, and one after another went back to their apartments.

"I don't think you are going to find anything," remarked Caleb Yates. "To my way of think-

ing, that boy must have followed the two men when they left."

"He couldn't do that without our seeing him," said Sam.

"And why not? Here's a back door, remember—and it's pretty dark outside."

"That may be so," returned Tom, shaking his curly head in perplexity. "It's too bad we didn't follow Girk and Baxter up—at least as far as the street."

"Perhaps Dick is at our house waiting for us to come back," put in Frank. "Let us go home and see. We can come back early in the morning." He looked at his watch. "Do you know that it is after two o'clock? I'm afraid my father will worry about me."

They talked the matter over and decided to return to Frank's home without further delay.

It was a silent trio that walked the streets, which were now practically deserted. Tom and Sam were much worried and Frank hardly less so, for the senator's son and Dick had been warm friends for years.

When they reached the mansion they found Senator Harrington pacing the library nervously.

"Well, here you are at last!" he cried. "I was wondering what had become of you."

He listened to their tale with close attention.

"No, Dick has not come in," he said—"at least, I think not. Run up to the bedrooms, Frank, and see."

Frank did as requested, and soon returned.

"No, he isn't about," he said disappointedly. "It's mighty queer what became of him."

CHAPTER IX.

A LOSS OF IMPORTANCE.

HALF stunned Dick lay for a long time on the newspapers and musty straw in the disused coal bin of the tenement cellar.

"This is what I call tough luck," he muttered to himself, and tried to force the somewhat loose gag from his mouth. But it would not come.

As soon as he felt strong enough he began to work on the rope which bound his hands together. But the rascals who had placed him in the cellar had done their work well, and the cord refused to budge.

With difficulty he managed to stand erect. The bin was not only pitch-dark, but full of cobwebs, and the latter brushed over his face whenever he moved. Then a spider crawled on his neck, greatly adding to his discomfort.

Hour after hour went by, and poor Dick was wondering what the end of the adventure would be when he heard a footstep overhead and then came the indistinct murmur of voices.

"Somebody is in the room overhead," he thought, and tried to make himself heard. But before he could do this the footsteps moved off and he heard the slamming of a door. Then all became as quiet as before.

An hour more went by, and the youth began to grow desperate. He was thirsty and his mouth and nose were filled with dust and dirt, rendering him far from comfortable.

In moving around his foot came in contact with an empty tomato can and this gave him an idea. He knelt down, and with the can between his heels, tried to saw apart the rope which bound his hands behind him.

The position was an awkward one and the job long and tiring, but at last the rope gave way and he found his hands free. He lost no further time in ridding himself of the gag and the rope which bound his feet.

He was now free so far as his bodily movements went, but he soon discovered that the coal bin was without any opening but a long, narrow shute covered with an iron plate, and that the heavy door was securely bolted. With all force he threw himself against the door, but it refused to budge.

Presently he remembered that he had several loose matches in his vest pocket, and, taking out

one of these, he lit it and then set fire to a thick shaving that was handy and which, being damp, burnt slowly.

"Hullo, here's something of a trap-door!" he exclaimed, as he gazed at the flooring above him. "I wonder if I can get out that way?"

He dropped the lighted shaving in a safe spot and put up his hands. The cut-out spot in the flooring went up with ease and Dick saw a fairly well furnished room beyond. Through one of the windows of the room he saw that daybreak was at hand.

"Great Cæsar! I've been down here all night!" he ejaculated, and, putting out the light, leaped up and drew himself through the opening. Once in the room he put the trap down again and rearranged the rag carpet he had shoved out of place.

The door to the room was locked, so the boy hurried to the window. Throwing open the blinds, he was about to leap out into the tenement alley when a woman suddenly confronted him. She was tall and heavy and had a red, disagreeable face.

"What are you doing in my rooms, young fellow?" she demanded.

"I'm trying to get out of this house?"

"What are you—a thief?"

"No. I was locked up in the cellar by a couple of bad men and got out by coming through a trap-door in your floor."

"A likely story!" sneered the woman, who had been away during the night and had heard nothing of the search for Dick. "You look like a sneak-thief. Anyway, you haven't any right in my rooms."

She came closer, and, as Dick leaped to the ground, clutched him by the arm.

"Let me go, madam."

"I won't. I'm going to hand you over to the police."

"I don't think you will!" retorted Dick, and with a twist he wrenched himself loose and started off on a run. The woman attempted to follow him, but soon gave up the chase.

Dick did not stop running until he was several blocks away. Then he dropped into a walk and looked about to see if his brothers or Frank were anywhere in sight."

"I suppose they couldn't make it out and went home," he mused. "I had better get to Frank's house without delay."

Dick was still a block away from Senator Harrington's residence when he espied Tom, Sam, and Frank coming toward him.

"My gracious, where have you been?" burst

out Tom, as he rushed forward. "You look as if you'd been rolling around a dirty cellar."

"And that is just about what I have been doing," answered Dick with a sickly laugh. "Do you know anything of Buddy Girk?" he added quickly.

"He ran away from the tenement, and Arnold Baxter was with him," replied Sam.

"Did you follow them?"

"No; we tried to find out what had become of you."

Each had to tell his story, and then Dick was led into the house. He lost no time in brushing up and washing himself, and by that time breakfast was ready in the dining room.

"It's a curious adventure, truly," said Senator Harrington, as he sat down with the boys. "I am glad you got out of it so well. The next time you see anything of those rascals you had better lose no time in informing the police."

The senator was one of that class of busy men who eat breakfast and read their morning newspaper at the same time. Having listened to what Dick had to say, he unfolded his paper and propped it up against a fruit dish before him.

"Excuse me, but I am in a hurry," he remarked apologetically. "I want to catch a train for New York at eight-thirty-five, and—hullo,

what's this! 'Rush & Wilder, Brokers and Bankers, Robbed! Thieves Enter the Office and Loot the Safe!' This is news certainly."

"Rush & Wilder!" cried Frank. "Is that the firm you do business with?"

"Yes, Frank. They have lost over sixty-five thousand dollars, besides a lot of unregistered bonds. That's a big loss."

"Will you suffer?"

"I don't know but what I shall. I'll have to let that trip to New York go and look into this." And Senator Harrington settled back to read the account of the robbery in full.

"They haven't any trace of the thieves, have they?" asked Tom.

"No. It says a rear window was broken open and the iron bars unscrewed. The safe door was found closed but unlocked."

"Then the thieves had the combination," put in Sam.

"More than likely."

"I wonder if Baxter and Girk committed that crime?" came from Dick. "I think they would be equal to it. They were up to some game."

"It might be," returned Senator Harrington, with interest. "But how would those men obtain the combination of Rush & Wilder's safe?"

"I'm sure I don't know, but—yes, they men-

tioned a man named Mooney who was to assist them. Perhaps he is known around the bankers' offices."

"We can soon find out. What were you boys going to do this morning?"

"I was going back to the tenements to see if I couldn't have Baxter and Girk arrested," said Dick.

"If they learn you have escaped they will probably clear out."

"I suppose that's so. But I might go down and see."

"Yes, I'd do that. Later on you can come over to Rush & Wilder's offices."

This was agreed to, and as soon as breakfast was over Dick and the other boys hurried off to where Yates' tenements were located.

Caleb Yates was on hand, and all visited the apartment Baxter and Buddy Girk had occupied. It was found that the men had not returned, and it did not look as if they intended to come back.

"They have skipped for good, take my word on it," muttered Tom, and the others agreed with him.

Thinking it would be useless to remain around the alleyway any longer, the four boys left the vicinity, and, boarding a street car, made their way to the thoroughfare upon which were located

the offices of the bankers and brokers who had been robbed.

A crowd was collected about the place and two policemen were keeping those outside in check.

"I want my money!" one old man was shouting. "This is a game of Charley Rush to do us out of our cash. I don't believe the office was robbed at all."

"You keep quiet, or I'll run you in," replied one of the policemen, and the old man lost no time in slinking out of sight.

"Can we go in?" asked Frank, and told who he was.

"I'll send in word and see," answered the policeman at the door.

"Oh, Frank!" came from the main office, and Senator Harrington beckoned to his son; and all four of the boys went in.

They found half a dozen men present, including the members of the firm, a detective, and the bookkeeper, a young man named Fredericks.

"You are the only one who had the combination besides ourselves, Fredericks," Charles Rush was saying to the bookkeeper. "I hate to suspect you, but——"

"Mr. Rush, you can't think I took that money and those securities!" gasped the bookkeeper, and fell back as if about to faint.

"I don't know what to think."

"I can give you my word I was not near the offices from four o'clock yesterday afternoon until I came this morning, after you."

"Have you spoken of the safe combination to anybody?"

"No, sir."

"Did you put the combination down in writing?" asked Mr. Wilder.

"No, I never did anything of that sort. The combination was an unusually easy one, as you know."

"Yes, far too easy for our good," groaned Mr. Rush. Then he gazed at the four boys curiously. "What brought you here?" he asked.

"We thought we might know something of this affair," said Dick, and told his story.

"There may be something in that," said the detective. "Especially if those men fail to turn up at that tenement again."

"Did you mention a man named Mooney?" cried Fredericks.

"I did."

"Do you know this Mooney?" put in Mr. Wilder to the bookkeeper.

"Subrug, the janitor, has a brother-in-law named Mooney—a wild kind of a chap who used to hang around more or less."

"We'll call Subrug in and find out where this Mooney is now," said Charles Rush.

The janitor proved to be a very nervous old man. "I don't know where Mooney is now," he said. "He's been a constant worry to me. He used to borrow money, but lately I wouldn't give him any more—and so he stopped coming around."

"Was he ever in here?"

The janitor thought for a moment.

"I think he was, sir—about a month ago. He started to help me clean the windows, but he was too clumsy and I made him give it up."

"I remember him!" cried the bookkeeper. "He was at the window, Mr. Rush, while you were at the safe. He must have watched you work the combination."

CHAPTER X.

TOM, SAM, AND FARMER FOX.

For an instant there was a dead silence in the bankers' offices. Charles Rush looked blankly at his bookkeeper.

"I believe Fredericks is right," said Mr. Wilder, the first to break the awkward pause. "I remember the fellow very well. I thought at the time that he was watching Mr. Rush rather closely."

"You had no business to bring in a man that was not to be trusted," growled Charles Rush, turning to the janitor.

"Do you think he stole the stuff?" ejaculated Subrug. "Sure Mooney wasn't smart enough for such a game."

"Perhaps not, but he got others to help him," said Dick. "He got Buddy Girk and Arnold Baxter, I feel positive of it."

"The whole thing fits together pretty well," said the detective. "If only we can lay hands on these men the boy mentions we'll be all right."

A long conversation followed, and then Dick and the others went to the police station.

The rooms at Yates' tenement were thoroughly searched once more, and a watch was set for Girk and Arnold Baxter.

But the rascals had flown and the watch proved useless.

In the meantime two detectives tried to trace what had become of Mooney, but this work also amounted to nothing, and it may be as well to add here that Mooney was never heard of again, having sailed for South America.

Upon an accounting it was learned that Rush & Wilder were by no means in a good financial condition and that Senator Harrington would lose a good sum of money should they fail.

"I'd give a thousand dollars to collar those thieves," said the senator dismally.

"If Arnold Baxter and Girk got that money they'll live in high clover for a while," remarked Dick, when the excitement was over and they had returned to Frank's home. "My! what a villain that Baxter is proving to be! No wonder Dan was bad! It must run in the blood."

The robbery kept the boys in Albany several days, and this being so, it was decided to abandon the trip on the river to New York.

"I'll send the *Spray* down by somebody," said

Dick, "and then we can take a train from here direct to Oak Run;" and so it was arranged.

The trip to Oak Run proved to be uneventful, and at the railroad station they were met by Jack Ness, the Rovers' hired man, who had driven over with the carryall to take them home.

"Glad to see you all looking so well," grinned the hired man. "Getting fat as butter, Master Tom."

"Thanks, Jack, I'm feeling fine. Any news?"

"No, sir, none exceptin' that your uncle has had a row with Joel Fox, who has the farm next to ours."

"What was the row about?" questioned Dick.

"All about some fruit, sir. We had a tree hangin' over Fox's fence—finest pear tree on the place, that was. Fox strips the tree at night, sir—saw him with my own eyes."

"Oh, what cheek!" burst out Sam. "What did uncle do?"

"Tried to talk to him, and Fox told him to mind his own business, that he could have what fruit hung over his fence. So he could, but not half of it hung that way, and he took every blessed pear."

"Fox always was a mean man," murmured Tom. "I'd like to square accounts with him before I go back to Putnam Hall."

"I reckoned as how you might be up to something like that," said Ness, with another grin. "But you want to be careful. Only yesterday Fox shot off his gun at some boys who were after his apples."

"Did he hit the boys?"

"I don't think he did."

"Who were they?"

"I don't know. And I reckon he don't either."

"Humph!" Tom mused for a moment. "I'd like to scare the mean fellow by making him think one of the boys was killed."

"That's an idea!" cried Sam, and winked at his brother. "Let's do it."

They were soon bowling over Swift River and along the road leading to Valley Brook farm. At the farmhouse their Uncle Randolph and Aunt Martha stood in the dooryard to greet them.

"Back again, safe and sound!" cried Randolph Rover. "I suppose you feel like regular sailors."

"Well, we do feel a little that way," laughed Sam, and returned the warm kiss his aunt bestowed upon him. "It's nice to be home once more."

"Would you rather stay here than go back to Putnam Hall?" asked his aunt quickly.

"Oh, no, I can't say that, Aunt Martha. But it's awfully nice here, nevertheless."

A hot supper was awaiting them, and while they ate they told of all that had happened since they had been away. Randolph Rover shuddered over the way Dick had been treated.

"Be careful, my boy," he said. "Remember, even your father could not bring this Arnold Baxter to justice. He is evidently a thoroughpaced scoundrel, and his companion is probably just as bad."

"And how goes the scientific farming, Uncle Randolph?" asked Tom, who knew how to touch his uncle in the right spot.

"Splendidly, my boy, splendidly! I am now working on a new rotation of crops. It will, I am certain, prove a revelation to the entire agricultural world."

"Did you make much money this season?" asked Sam dryly.

"Well—er—no; in fact, we ran a little behind. But we will do finely next year—I am certain of it. I will have some strawberries and celery which shall astonish our State agricultural committee," answered Randolph Rover. He was always enthusiastic, in spite of almost constant failure. Thus far his hobby had netted him a loss of several thousand dollars.

It was Friday, and Saturday was to be given over to packing up for school. Yet on Saturday morning Tom managed to call Sam aside.

"We'll go over to Fox's," said he. "Are you ready?"

"I am, Tom," answered the younger brother. "And be sure and pile it on."

"Trust me for that," and Tom winked in a fashion that set Sam to roaring.

They found Joel Fox at work along the roadside, mending a part of a stone wall which had tumbled down. Fox was a Yankee, and miserly and sour to the very core.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded, as the boys came to a halt in front of him.

"Why, Mr. Fox, I thought you had skipped out!" cried Tom in pretended surprise.

"Skipped out?"

"Yes."

"Why should I skip out, boy?"

"On account of Harry Smith."

"Harry Smith? Who is he?"

"Harry Smith of Oak Run—the boy who was shot the other day. Didn't you hear he was dead?"

At these words Joel Fox dropped the tools he was using and turned pale.

"Is—er—is thet boy—er——" He could not finish.

"It was a wicked thing to do," put in Sam. "Any man that would shoot a boy ought to be lynched."

"Perhaps that crowd of men were coming up here," went on Tom. "Didn't they have a rope with them?"

"To be sure they had a rope, Tom. And one of 'em said something about hanging."

"What crowd are you talking about?" stammered Joel Fox, growing paler and paler.

"The crowd at the depot. Did you shoot him, Mr. Fox? I can't hardly believe it true, although I know you were mean enough to take my uncle's pears."

"I—er—the pears were on my property. I—er—I didn't shoot at any boy. I—er—I shot at some crows in my cornfield," stammered Joel Fox. "Did you say a crowd of men were coming over here with a rope?"

"You'll see fast enough, you bad man!" cried Tom, and ran off, followed by Sam. In vain Fox tried to call them back.

The boys went as far as a turn in the road, then hid behind some bushes. Soon they saw Fox pick up his tools and make for his barn. Then he came out and hurried for his house.

"I guess he's pretty well rattled," laughed Tom. "Won't he be mad when he learns how he has been fooled!"

They waited for a while, but as Fox did not reappear they hurried back home by another road, that the man might not see them.

Tom was right when he said that the miserly old farmer was "rattled," as it is commonly called.

All day long the coward remained in the house, as nervous as a cat and afraid that a crowd of men would appear at any minute to lynch him.

His wife did not know what to make of such actions and finally demanded an explanation, and when it was not forthcoming threatened him with the broom, which she had used as a weapon of offense several times previously.

"They say he's dead!" finally burst out Joel. "They are goin' ter lynch me for it. Hide me, Mandy, hide me!"

"Who is dead, Joel Fox?"

"The boy I shot at fer stealin' them apples. Oh, they'll lynch me; I feel it in my bones!" groaned the old man.

"Who was it?"

"Harry Smith of Oak Run."

"And he is dead?"

"So they say. But I didn't calkerlate I hit him at all," whined Joel.

"No more you did, for I saw him run away, and he went clear out o' sight up the road. Who told you this?" demanded Mrs. Fox.

"Those Rover boys, Tom an' Sam."

"Those young imps! Joel, they are fooling you."

"Do you really think so, Mandy?" asked the man hopefully.

"I do. If I was you I'd go over to Oak Run and find out."

"No, no—if it's true they'll lynch me, I know they will!"

"Then I'll go over. I know Mrs. Smith. If he's dead there will be crape on the door an' I won't go in," concluded Mrs. Fox.

And getting out a horse and buckboard, she drove over to Oak Run and to the Smiths' place. She found no crape on the door. Harry Smith sat on the porch, his arm in a sling. Plucking up courage she drew rein, dismounted, and walked up to the boy, who was one of the Rover brothers' friends.

"How is your arm, Harry?" she began softly.

"It's pretty fair," answered the boy politely. "Won't you come in, Mrs. Fox?"

"Well, I guess not. Harry, I'm sorry for this."

"So am I sorry, Mrs. Fox."

"I didn't think you would do it. Why didn't you come up to the house an' ask for them apples?"

The boy looked puzzled, for the simple reason that he *was* puzzled. "I don't understand you. What apples?"

"The ones you tried to steal."

"I didn't try to steal any apples, Mrs. Fox. What makes you think that?"

"Didn't you try to git in our orchard when Joel fired on you?" cried Mrs. Fox.

"Why, I haven't been anywhere near your orchard!"

"No?" Mrs. Fox looked bewildered. "Then —then how did you get hurt?" she faltered.

"Why, Mr. Wicks and I were cleaning out pa's old shotgun when it went off accidentally, and I got a couple of the shot in my forearm," answered Harry Smith promptly.

The answer took away Mrs. Fox's breath. "Drat them boys—I knowed it!" she muttered, and drove away without another word. Harry Smith was much puzzled, but letters which soon after passed between him and Tom cleared up the mystery.

But the boys never heard of how Joel Fox fared when his wife got home. The lady arrived "as

mad as a hornet," to use a popular saying. "You're the worst old fool ever was, Joel Fox!" were her first words, and a bitter quarrel followed that ended only when the man was driven out of the house with the ever-trustworthy broom. Joel Fox wanted to go over to the Rover farm, to have it out with Tom and Sam, but somehow he could not pluck up the courage to make the move.

CHAPTER XI.

FUN AT PUTNAM HALL.

"BACK to Putnam Hall at last!"

"Yes, boys, back at last! Hurrah for the dear old school, and all the boys in it!"

Peleg Snuggers, the general utility man of the Hall, had just brought the boys up from Cedarville, to which place they had journeyed from Ithaca on the regular afternoon boat running up Cayuga Lake. With the Rovers had come Fred Garrison, Larry Colby, and several others of their old school chums.*

"Glad to welcome you back, boys!" exclaimed Captain Victor Putnam, a pleasant smile on his face. He shook hands all around. "Did you have a nice trip?"

"Splendid, sir," said Tom. "Oh, how do you do, Mr. Strong?" and he ran to meet the head teacher. He could not help but think of how different things were now to when he had first

* For the doings of the Putnam Hall students previous to the arrival at that institution of the Rover boys see "The Putnam Hall Series," the first volume of which is entitled, "The Putnam Hall Cadets."—PUBLISHERS.

arrived at Putnam Hall, the year previous, and Josiah Crabtree had locked him up in the guard-room for exploding a big firecracker in honor of the occasion.

"Well, Thomas, I hope you have left all your pranks behind," observed George Strong. "How about it?" And his eyes twinkled.

"Oh, I'm going in for study this session," answered Tom demurely. And then he winked at Larry on the sly. But his words did not deceive George Strong, who understood only too well Tom's propensity for mischief.

It was the first day of the term, but as the cadets kept on arriving with every train and boat no lessons were given out, and the boys were allowed to do pretty much as they pleased. They visited every nook and corner, including the classrooms, the dormitories, the stables, and the gymnasium and boathouse, and nearly bothered the life out of Peleg Snuggers, Mrs. Green, the housekeeper, and Alexander Pop, the colored waiter of the mess hall.

"Hullo, Aleck!" cried Tom, rushing up and grabbing the colored man by the hand. "How are you—pretty well? I'm first-rate—never was better in my life!" And he gave the hand a hard squeeze.

"Stop, wot yo' up to, Massah Rober!" roared

the waiter, leaping off his feet. "Wot yo' got in yo' hand?"

"Why, nothing, Aleck, my boy. Yes, I'm feeling fine. I've gained fifteen pounds, and——"

"Yo' lemme go, sah—yo' is stickin' pins in my hand!" howled Pop. "Oh, deah, now de term's dun begun we'll all be dead wid dat boy's tricks!" he moaned, as Tom ran off, throwing away several tiny tacks as he did so.

"So you've come back, have you?" observed Mrs. Green, as Tom stopped at the kitchen door. "Well, just you mind your Ps and Qs, or there will be trouble, I can tell you that, Tom Rover."

"Why, we never had any trouble, Mrs. Green," he said soberly. "Did we?"

"Oh, of course not! But who stole that can of peaches right after the Christmas holidays, and who locked one of the cows in the back hall and nearly scared the washwoman to death? Oh, dear, you never did anything, never!" And Mrs. Green shook her hand warningly.

"Do you mean to say I would take a can of peaches, Mrs. Green?" asked Tom, and then his face fell. "Oh, dear, you always did put me down as the worst boy in the school, when—I—I—do—my—very best," and, almost sobbing, Tom put his face up against his coat sleeve.

Mrs. Green was very tender-hearted in spite of her somewhat free tongue, and she was all sympathy immediately. "There, there, Tom, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings," she said soothingly. "I—I was only fooling. Will you have a piece of hot mince pie? It's just out of the oven."

"I—I—don't know!" sobbed Tom. "You treat me so—so awful meanly!"

"I didn't mean it—really I didn't. Come, sit down and have the pie, that's a good boy. I'm glad you are back, and you are better than lots of the other cadets, so there!" And Tom slid into a seat and devoured the generous slice of pie dealt out to him with keen relish.

"It's really like home," he murmured presently. "Mrs. Green, when you die, they ought to erect an awfully big monument over your grave."

"But I'm not dying just yet, Tom—pray don't speak of it."

"By the way, my aunt was dyeing when I left home," went on the boy, as he moved toward the door.

"Indeed. Didn't you hate to leave her?"

"Not at all. She didn't seem to mind it."

"What was her trouble, Tom—consumption?"

"No, she had an old brown dress that had faded out green and she was dyeing it black," was

the soft answer, and then Tom ran for his life. Mrs. Green did not speak to him for almost a week after that. And yet with it all she could not help but like the boy.

Of course Peleg Snuggers came in for his full share of attention, and the utility man had all sorts of jokes played on him until he was almost in despair.

"Don't, young gents, don't!" he would plead. "Oh, my! An' to think the term's just begun!" And he mopped his brow with his red bandanna handkerchief.

"Peleg, you are getting handsomer every day," remarked Sam. "It's a wonder you don't go into the beauty show in New York."

"Wot kind of a joke is that, Master Rover?"

"Oh, it's no joke. You are handsome. Won't you let me take your photograph?"

"Have you got a camera?"

"To be sure. Here it is." Sam drew a tiny box from his pocket. "Now stand still and I'll take a snap shot."

Snuggers had wanted to have his picture taken for some time, to send to a certain girl in Cedarville in whom he was much interested. To have a photograph taken for nothing tickled him greatly.

"Wait till I brush up a bit," he said, and got

out a pocket-comb, with which he adjusted his hair and his stubby mustache.

"Now stand straight and look happy!" cried Sam, as a crowd collected around. "Raise your right hand to your breast, just as all statesmen do. Up with your chin—don't drop your left eye—close your mouth—up with that ear—now then, don't budge on your life!"

Peleg Snuggers stood like a statue, his chin well up in the air and his eyes set into a steady stare. Sam elevated the tiny box and kept the man standing for fully half a minute, while the boys behind Snuggers could scarcely keep from roaring.

"There you are," said Sam at last. "Now wait a minute and the picture will be finished."

"Don't you have to print 'em in the sun?" asked Snuggers.

"No, this is a new patented process." Sam drew a square of tin from the box. "There you are, Peleg, and all for nothing."

"I don't see any picture," growled Snuggers, looking at the square blankly.

"You must breathe on it, Peleg; then the picture will come out beautifully. It's a little fresh yet."

Peleg Snuggers breathed on the square of tin as directed, and then there slowly came to view

the picture of—a donkey's head! The boys gathered around set up a shout.

"Hurrah, Peleg, what a fine picture!"

"You've changed a little in your looks, Peleg, since you had the last taken, eh?"

"Your girl will fall in love with that picture, Peleg, I'm certain of it."

"Sam Rover, I'll git square, see if I don't!" roared the utility man, as he dashed the square of tin to the ground. "I knowed you was goin' to play a joke on me." And he started to walk off.

"Why, what's the matter?" demanded Sam innocently. "Isn't it a good picture?"

"I'll picture you!"

"I thought I was doing my best."

"Show me off for a donkey! If it wasn't against the rules I'd—I'd wollop you!"

"A donkey! Oh, Peleg, I did nothing of the kind! Here is your picture, on my word of honor."

"It's a donkey's head, I say."

"And I say it's your picture. I'll leave it to anybody in the crowd."

"I guess I know a donkey's head when I see it, Master Rover. I didn't expect no such joke from you, though your brother Tom might have played it."

"Boys, isn't this a good picture?" demanded

Sam, showing up the other side of the tin square.

"Why, splendid!" came from the crowd. "Peleg, there is some mistake here."

"Oh, you can't joke me no more!" returned the utility man.

"But just look!" pleaded Sam. "Isn't that a good picture of you? If you don't say so yourself I'll give you five dollars."

He handed the tin over again, this time with the opposite side toward Snuggers. He had just breathed on it heavily.

"Now blow on it," he continued, and Snuggers did as directed. The moisture cleared away, revealing the face of the utility man in a bit of looking-glass!

"Oh, you're tremendously smart, you are!" muttered Snuggers, and walked off. But he was not half as angry as he had been a few minutes before.

CHAPTER XII.

DICK VISITS DORA STANHOPE.

"BATTALION, fall in. Attention! Carry arms!"

It was several days later, and the cadets were out for their first parade around the grounds. Dick still retained his position as second lieutenant of Company A, having been re-elected the term previous. Tom was first sergeant of Company B, while Sam was still "a high private in the rear rank," as the saying goes.

The day was an ideal one in the early autumn, and Captain Putnam and George Strong were both on hand to watch the drilling. Major Bart Conners had graduated the year before, and his place was now filled by Harry Blossom, formerly captain of Company A.

"Shoulder arms!" came the next order. "Battalion, forward march!"

Tap! tap! tap, tap, tap! went the drums, and then the bass drum joined in, and the two companies moved off. Soon the fifers struck up a

lively air, and away went the cadets, around the grounds, down the road and back, and then to the mess-hall for supper. The boys felt good to be in the ranks once more, and Captain Putnam congratulated them on their soldierly appearance.

"It does me good to see that you have not forgotten your former instructions in drilling and marching," he said. "I trust that during the present term we shall see even better results, so that the work done here may compare favorably with that done at West Point."

The school had now begun to settle down, and inside of a few days everything was working smoothly.

"What a difference it makes to have Dan Baxter and Mumps absent!" observed Tom to Dick. "We don't have any of the old-fashion rows any more."

"I'd like to know what Mumps and Josiah Crabtree were up to," put in the elder Rover. "It's queer we didn't hear any more of them. I'm going to get off soon and try and see Dora Stanhope. Perhaps she knows what Crabtree is doing."

On that day Frank Harrington received a letter from his father, in which the senator stated that nothing more had been heard of the men who had looted Rush & Wilder's safe. "I fancy they

have left the State, if not the country," was Mr. Harrington's comment.

The three Rover boys got off the next day and took a walk past the cottages where resided the Lanings and the Stanhopes. At the Lanings' place Nellie and Grace came out to greet them.

"So you are back!" cried Nellie, blushing sweetly. "Father said you were. He saw you come in at Cedarville."

"Yes, back again, and glad to meet you," answered Tom, and gave the girl's hand a tight squeeze, while Sam and Dick also shook hands with both girls.

"And how do you feel?" asked Grace of Dick. "Wasn't that dreadful the way Mr. Baxter treated you on that train!"

"Well, he got the worst of it," answered Dick.

"Oh, I know that! And now they suspect him of a robbery in Albany. Papa was reading it in one of the Ithaca papers."

"Yes, and I guess he's guilty, Grace. But tell me, does Josiah Crabtree worry Mrs. Stanhope any more?" continued the boy seriously.

"Why, to be sure he does! And, oh, let me tell you something! Dora told me that he was terribly angry over having been sent to Chicago on a wild-goose chase."

"I wish he had remained out there."

"So do all of us," said Nellie Laning. "He seems bound to marry aunty, in spite of our opposition and Dora's."

"How is your aunt now?"

"She is not very well. Do you know, I think Mr. Crabtree exercises some sort of a strange influence over her."

"I think that myself. If he could do it, I think he would hypnotize her into marrying him. He is just rascal enough. Of course he is after the money Mrs. Stanhope is holding in trust for Dora."

"He can't touch that."

"He can—if he can get hold of it. I don't think Josiah Crabtree cares much for the law. Is Dora home now?"

"I believe she is. She was this morning, I know."

"I'm going over to see her," went on Dick. "I promised to do all I could for her in this matter of standing Crabtree off, and I'm going to keep my word."

As Sam and Tom wished to converse with the Laning girls a bit longer, Dick went on ahead, telling them to follow him when they chose.

It did not take Dick long to reach the Stanhope homestead. As he approached he heard loud talking on the front piazza.

"I want nothing to do with you, Dan Baxter, and I am astonished that you should come here to see me," came in Dora Stanhope's voice.

"That's all right, Dora; don't get ugly," was the reply from the former bully of Putnam Hall. "I'm not going to hurt you."

"I want you to go away and leave my mother and me alone."

"Will you come and see Mr. Crabtree, as he wanted?"

"No. If Mr. Crabtree wants to see me let him come here."

"But you told him you didn't want him here," said Dan Baxter.

"Neither I do—to see mamma. But I won't go to see him, so there! Now please leave me."

"You're a strong-minded miss, you are," sneered Dan Baxter. "You want taking down."

"What's that you say?" demanded Dick, as he strode up. "Baxter, you deserve to be knocked down for insulting this young lady."

"Oh, Dick, is that you?" burst out Dora, her pretty face brightening instantly. "I'm glad you came."

"Dick Rover!" muttered the bully, and his face fell. "What brought you here?"

"That is my business, Baxter. So Josiah Crabtree sent you to annoy Miss Stanhope."

"It's none of your affair if he did."

"I say it is my affair."

"Do you want to get into another row with me, Dick Rover?" And Dan Baxter clenched his fists.

"If we fought, the battle would end as it did before—you would be knocked out," answered Dick. "You have no right to come here if these people want you to stay away, and you had better take yourself off."

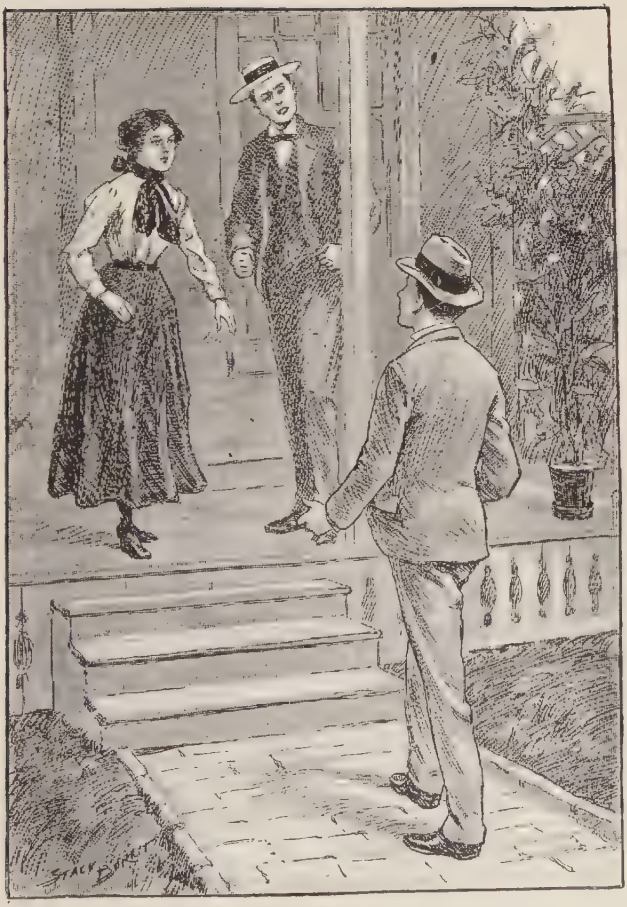
"I'll go when I please. You can't make me go—nor the Stanhopes neither," growled Dan Baxter.

At these words Dick grew white. Dora, as old readers know, was his dearest friend, and he could not stand having her spoken of so rudely. For a moment the two boys glared at each other; then Baxter aimed a blow at Dick's face.

The elder Rover ducked and hit out in return, landing upon Baxter's neck. Dora gave a scream.

"Oh, Dick! don't fight with him!"

"I won't—I'll—I'll run him out!" panted Dick, and leaping behind the bully, he caught him by the collar and the back. "Out you go, you brute!" he added, and began to run Baxter toward the open gateway. In vain the bully tried to resist. Dick's blood was up, and he did not re-



"DICK ROVER," MUTTERED THE BULLY, AS HIS FACE FELL, "WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?"—*Page 105.*

lease his hold or relinquish his efforts until the bully had been pushed along the road for a distance of fifty yards.

"Now you dare to come back!" said Dick, shaking his fist at the fellow. "If you come, I'll have you locked up."

"We'll see about it, Dick Rover," snarled Dan Baxter. He paused for an instant. "'He laughs best who laughs last,'" he muttered, and strode off as fast as his long legs would carry him, in the direction of the lake.

When Dick returned to Dora he found that the girl had sunk down on the piazza steps nearly overcome."

"Don't be afraid, Dora; he's gone," he said kindly.

"Oh, Dick, I'm so afraid of him!" she gasped.

"Was he here long before I came up?"

"About ten minutes. He brought a message from Mr. Crabtree, who wants to see me in Cedarville. I told him I wouldn't go—and I won't."

"I shouldn't either, Dora. Perhaps Crabtree only wants to get you away from the house so that he can come here and see your mother."

"I never thought of that."

"Where is your mother now?"

"Lying down with a headache. She is get-

ting more nervous every day. I wish Mr. Crabtree was—was——"

"In Halifax, I suppose," finished Dick.

"Yes, or some other place as far off. Every time he comes near mamma she has the strangest spells!"

"He is a bad man—no doubt of it, Dora. I almost wish we had him back to the Hall. Then I could keep my eye on him."

"I'm glad you are back, Dick," said the girl softly. "If there is any trouble, you'll let me call on you, won't you?"

"I shall expect you to call on me, Dora—the very first thing," he returned promptly. "I wouldn't have anything happen to you or your mother for anything in the world."

By this time Sam and Tom were coming up, and they had to be told about Dan Baxter.

"He and his father are a team," said Sam. "I wonder if he knows what his father has done. If I meet him I'll ask him."

Dick had expected to pay his respects to Mrs. Stanhope, but now thought best not to disturb her. All the boys had a short chat with Dora, and then set out on the return to school.

On the way the three boys discussed the situation, but could get little satisfaction out of their talk.

"Something is in the wind," was Dick's comment. "But what it is time alone will reveal."

And he was right, as events in the near future proved.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIRE AT THE HALL.

Sam had been right when he said that Dan Baxter was like his father. Parent and son were thoroughly bad, but how bad the Rover boys and their friends were still to learn.

On Saturday the cadets had a half-holiday, and some of them went over to the lake to fish, Sam and Tom accompanying the party.

While the boys were waiting for bites they espied a large sail-boat skimming along the lake shore. As it came closer Tom and Sam were much astonished to see that the boat contained Dan Baxter, Josiah Crabtree, and Mumps.

"By jinks, there is Mumps' yacht!" ejaculated Tom. "How in the world did he get her up here?"

"Brought her by way of the canal and the river, I suppose," answered Sam.

"Hullo there!" called out Larry Colby, who was in the crowd. "Mumps, you might be in better company."

"You keep your mouth shut!" retorted Fenwick.

"If you talk to me I'll come ashore and give you a thrashing," put in Baxter.

"I dare you to come ashore!" burst out Tom. "You'll stay where you are if you know when you are well off."

No more was said, and presently the boat sped out of sight around a bend of the lake shore. Fishing proved to be good, and in the excitement of the sport Baxter and the others were, for the time being, forgotten.

It was late when the boys packed up. Sam had six fish, Tom as many more, and all of the others a fair catch.

"We'll have fish to-morrow for breakfast, sure," said Larry. "Hurry up, or we'll be late."

The party started off, but had only gone a short distance when Sam remembered that he had left his knife sticking in the stump of a tree, and ran back to get it, in the meantime turning his fish over to Tom.

The fishing place was behind a grove of trees, and when Sam reached it again he was much surprised to see Dan Baxter on shore, he having just left the yacht, which was cruising some distance away.

"Hullo! so you came back to have it out with

me, eh?" cried Baxter, and before Sam could say a word, he was hurled flat and the bully came down on top of him.

Sam fought bravely, but was no match for the big fellow, who began to hammer him unmercifully. Realizing how matters were turning, the youngest Rover began to cry for help.

"You shut up!" stormed Dan Baxter. "Shut up, or I'll give it to you worse than ever!"

But Sam had no intention of taking such a drubbing quietly, and he yelled louder than ever. His cries reached Tom, who had dropped behind to allow his brother to catch up.

"Something is wrong," he muttered, and hanging the fish on a bush, he ran back at the top of his speed.

Dan Baxter heard him coming and tried to get away, but as Tom called out, Sam's courage rose, and he grabbed the bully by the foot and held him.

"Let go!" roared Dan Baxter, but Sam would not, and in a second more Tom was at hand and hit the bully such a stinging blow in the face that Baxter went down in a heap.

A rough-and-tumble scrimmage ensued, and it must be said that the bully got by far the worst of it. Tom hit him again and again, and Sam also, and when at last he staggered to his feet

one eye was almost closed and his nose was bleeding profusely.

"Now I guess you won't tackle any of us again," said Tom.

"I'll get even—mark my words!" roared Baxter, and ran down the lake shore in the direction the *Falcon* had taken.

When Baxter reached the yacht he was so weak he could scarcely stand. It was a long while before he could stop his nose from bleeding, and his eye stung with a pain that was maddening.

"Did little Sam Rover do that?" asked Mumps, while Josiah Crabtree looked on in curious silence.

"Sam Rover?" snorted Baxter. "Not much! Why, the whole crowd piled on me—six or seven of them at a time. They tried to kill me!"

"Didn't you defend yourself, Daniel?" asked Crabtree.

"Of course I did. I knocked two of them down—and another fellow had two of his teeth broken. But I couldn't fight all six single-handed."

"Oh, I presume not—especially such brutes as Captain Putnam is now raising."

"It's a pity we can't get square with them," said Mumps.

"Oh, I'll get square! You just wait," an-

swered the bully cunningly. "I'm not done with them yet by any means."

"What will you do?"

"Just you wait and see."

"I don't wish to have you interfere with our plans," put in Josiah Crabtree.

"I won't interfere with the other plans. But I am going to get square."

"We've had delay enough," continued Josiah Crabtree.

"Well, that wasn't my fault. Mumps got sick, and that's all there is to it," growled Dan Baxter, and then went to dressing his swollen eye once more.

In the meantime Sam and Tom had rejoined their fellows and told their story. All of the others were indignant at Baxter's doing and glad to learn he had been given a sound drubbing.

"I don't see why he hangs in this neighborhood," said Larry. "It's a wonder he doesn't try to join his father."

"They are probably on the outs—since Dan took that two hundred dollars," answered Tom.

The boys were all tired that night, and the occupants of Dormitory No. 6 retired early in consequence.

It was a little after midnight that Dick awoke

with a cough. He sat up in bed and opened his eyes to find the room almost filled with smoke.

"For gracious sake!" he muttered. "What's the matter here? Sam! Tom!"

"What's this?" came from Larry Colby. "Is the house on fire?"

He leaped from his bed, and so did Dick. By this time the smoke in the dormitory was getting thicker and thicker. It was coming through the door, which stood partly open.

"Wake up, boys; the Hall is on fire!"

"Fire! fire! fire!" came from all parts of the building.

One after another the cadets roused up. Some were completely bewildered and did not know what to do.

"We had better get out as soon as we can!" exclaimed Dick, as he slipped into his trousers. "Come, Tom! come, Sam!"

He ran for the hallway, to find it so thick with smoke that escape in that direction seemed cut off.

"We can't go down that way!" came from Frank. "We'd be smothered to death."

"Let's jump from the windows," put in Larry, who was more frightened than any of the others.

"No, no; don't jump yet!" cried Tom. "You'll break a leg, and maybe your neck."

"But I don't want to be burnt up," returned Larry, his teeth chattering.

"Hold on, we have that rope we used when we had the feast last summer," said Sam. "Let us tie that to the window and get down on it."

Sam ran to the closet and found the rope just where it had been left, on a hook in the corner. Soon they had it out and fastened to a bed-slat braced across the window frame.

"Down you go, Larry!" said Dick. "Be careful; I reckon we have plenty of time."

Larry slid down in a jiffy, and one after another the others came after him, Dick being the last. As the youth turned around on the window sill he saw the fire creeping in at the door. Their escape had taken place none too soon.

Down on the parade ground they found a motley collection of half-dressed cadets, instructors, servants, and others who had been sleeping in the burning Hall.

In the midst of the group was Captain Putnam, pale but comparatively cool, considering the excitement under which he was laboring.

"Are all the boys out?" he asked of George Strong. "Line them up and call the roll."

The roll-call was put through in double-quick order. Only two lads were missing, a boy named Harrison and another named Leeks.

"Here comes Harrison!" cried Harry Blossom, and the boy limped forth from the opposite side of the burning building.

"I sprang from the east wing," he explained. "I guess my ankle is sprained." And then he dropped down and was carried away from the scene to a place of safety.

"Where can Leeks be?" questioned Captain Putnam. "Leeks! Leeks! Where are you?" he cried with all the power of his lungs.

At first the only reply that came back was the roaring of the flames, as they mounted from one section of the Hall to another. Then, however, came a shriek from the rear end of the western wing.

"Help me! Save me! I don't want to be burnt up!"

"It is Leeks!" cried Tom. "See, he is on the gutter of the roof!"

He pointed in the direction, and all saw the cadet, dressed in nothing but his white gown, clinging desperately to the slates of the roof above the gutter. He had run from the second floor to the third and sought safety by crawling out of a dormer window.

"Don't jump!" cried a dozen in concert. "Don't jump, Leeks!"

"What shall I do? The flames are coming up

here as fast as they can!" groaned the cadet. "Oh, save me, somebody!"

"Let's get the ladder," said Dick, and started for the barn, with a score of cadets at his heels and George Strong with them. In the meantime Captain Putnam again urged Leeks to remain where he was. "We will save you, don't fear," he added.

The fire below now made the scene as bright as day, and already the neighbors were rushing to the scene, followed by the Cedarville volunteer fire department, with their hose cart and old-style hand-pump engine.

Soon the ladder was brought out of the barn and rushed to the spot directly below where Leeks stood. Willing hands raised it against the building. And then a loud groan went up. The ladder was too short by ten feet—and it was the only ladder to be had!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF DORA STANHOPE.

"We can't reach him with that!"

"He will be burnt up before we can get to him! See, the flames are already coming out of the window beside him!"

"Save me! Push the ladder up higher!" shrieked Leeks. "I can't get down to it!"

"Wait, I've got an idea," put in Dick, and ran behind the barn to the garden patch.

Soon he came back armed with a long and knotty beanpole. George Strong was already on the ladder, and the beanpole was shoved up to him.

"That's all right!" came the cry. "Leeks, can't you get hold?"

"I'll try," said the terrorized boy.

As quickly as he could George Strong mounted to the very top of the ladder. Then the teacher raised the beanpole, heavy end upward, until Leeks managed to grasp it.

"Can you steady it against the gutter?" asked the teacher.

"I—I don't know. If I had a cord——"

"There is a string on the window blind. Tie the end of the pole to that."

With trembling hands Leeks did as directed. The cord was not a stout one, but it was sufficiently strong to keep the beanpole in position, and that was all that was required, since the teacher steadied it and held it up from below.

But getting over the edge of the gutter was no easy movement, and those on the ground held their breath as Leeks crawled to where he could grasp the beanpole. Then the cadet came down on the run to where his feet struck the top of the ladder. In a minute more he and the head teacher came to the ground.

A cheer went up. "Hurrah! Leeks is safe! Good for Mr. Strong!" In the midst of the cries Leeks fainted and had to be carried to the gymnasium for treatment.

The fire had evidently started in the lower hallway of the building, in a closet under the broad stairs. It was burning furiously in all of the halls and toward the rear.

As soon as Captain Putnam felt assured that the scholars and all others were safe he organized the boys into a bucket brigade. In the meantime Mrs. Green, with more forethought than seemed possible to her nature, had turned on the water

pipes leading from the water tower on the Hall roof. Thus a dozen small streams were thrown on the fire, to which the boys soon added their buckets of water. Then the Cedarville fire department added their services, and fighting the fire began in earnest, while Captain Putnam directed the removal of all furniture and other things which could be gotten out with safety.

"Say, but this is work!" panted Tom, as he struggled along with a big bucket of water in each hand. "I only hope we succeed in saving the building."

"We won't save all of it," replied Sam, who was laboring as hard as anybody. "And I guess all of our clothing will be burnt up."

"Don't say a word about dat!" put in Alexander Pop. "I dun gone an' buy me a new pair ob checked pants las' week—an' a new silk hat, too!" And the negro was almost ready to cry with vexation at the thought that those new clothes, with which he had hoped to cut such a dash, would go down in the ruin.

It was a good two hours ere the fire was gotten under control, and not until after sunrise was the last spark put out. Then Captain Putnam and several of the others surveyed the damage that had been done.

All of the stairways had been burned away,

and the plastering from top to bottom of the three hallways was down. In the rear, two dormitories and the garret floor had been burned out.

"A nasty fire," said the captain to his head assistant. "I'm afraid I will have to close down the school, at least for a while."

"I don't know as I would do that, captain," replied George Strong. "The classrooms are not touched, neither are some of the dormitories. We can bunch the boys up a bit—and I think they would rather be bunched up than be sent home."

The matter was talked over at some length, and in the end put to the boys themselves, and all declared that they would rather remain, and some added that during their spare hours they would do all they could to put the place into shape again.

"That will be unnecessary," said Captain Putnam. "The insurance companies will have to do the repairing, and I shall notify them without delay. As to the clothing that has been lost, I will make that good to each of you."

The fire was not yet out when Dora Stanhope appeared, in company with John Laning and Nellie and Grace.

"I am so afraid somebody had been burnt up!" cried Dora to Dick. "I'm awfully glad you and your brothers are all right!"

"We got out easily," answered Dick, but he gave Dora a bright smile for the interest she had shown in him.

"How did the fire start?" questioned John Laning.

"Nobody knows," answered Tom. "Captain Putnam says it is a complete mystery."

"I believe the Hall was set on fire," put in Sam. "And I believe I can point out the party who is guilty."

"Dan Baxter?" put in Larry.

"Yes."

"Would he be wicked enough to do that?" cried Dora in horror.

"Yes, I guess Dan is bad enough to do anything," said Dick.

"He was terribly mad over the way we mauled him," came from Tom. "He was just about ready to kill us."

"If that's the case Captain Putnam had better have Baxter arrested," suggested John Laning. "He is a dangerous boy to be at large."

Captain Putnam came up and was soon told of what had occurred. He had not heard of the fight down at the lake, but was not greatly surprised.

"I do not blame you boys, since Baxter began the attack," he said. "And I agree, he is a thor-

oughly bad fellow. Yes, I'll have him arrested —providing we can locate him."

Word had already been sent to a clothier, and a gentlemen's outfitter, both of whom had stores in Cedarville, and before noon these men came to the Hall, and the students were fitted out temporarily—that is, the portion who had lost the majority of their clothing. Then a gang of laborers and scrub-women were sent to work to clean up the muss and make the classrooms and unburned dormitories fit for occupation. In two days Putnam Hall was once more in full sway, as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened, the burnt section being boarded entirely off from the other.

The search for Dan Baxter began at once, but nothing could be ascertained concerning him. A search was also made for the *Falcon,* but that craft had disappeared from the lake.

"Well, I hope we never hear or see anything more of Baxter," said Sam. "I declare, he is worse than a snake in the grass."

"I'd rather see him locked up," answered Dick grimly. "Then I'd know he was out of the way of harming us further."

Several days slipped by and the boys were deep in their studies, when, late one afternoon, Dick was greatly astonished by being told that Mrs.

Stanhope was in the parlor waiting to see him.

"She seems very much agitated," said Captain Putnam. "I am afraid something is wrong. Can you say what it is, Richard?"

"No, sir; excepting Dan Baxter or Josiah Crabtree may have been worrying them again."

"Do you mean to tell me that Baxter goes to their house?"

"He has been there several times to my knowledge. He's as sweet on Dora Stanhope as Josiah Crabtree is anxious over Mrs. Stanhope—and neither person deserves any encouragement."

"I thought the engagement between Mrs. Stanhope and Crabtree was off."

"It was—for the time being. But it seems Mr. Crabtree isn't going to give her up—he is too anxious to get hold of Dora's money," and with this remark Dick hurried to the parlor.

"Oh, Dick Rover!" cried Mrs. Stanhope, when he entered, "do tell me what has become of Dora."

"Dora!" he repeated in bewilderment. "I don't know, I am sure. Has she left home?"

"She hasn't been home since she answered your note yesterday afternoon."

"My note? I sent her no note."

"But I found it lying on the dining-room table

last evening, when I came from my room. You see, I had been lying down with a headache."

"Mrs. Stanhope, I sent Dora no note. If she got one that was signed with my name it was a forgery."

"Oh, Dick Rover!" The lady had arisen on his entrance, now she sank back into a faint.

The youth was greatly alarmed, and at once rang for one of the servants and also for Captain Putnam.

"What is the matter?" asked the master of the Hall.

"Something is very much wrong, sir," replied Dick. "Dora Stanhope has disappeared."

"Disappeared!"

"Yes, sir. She received some sort of a note signed with my name."

No more was said just then, Dick, the captain, and the servant doing all they could to restore Mrs. Stanhope to consciousness. When the lady finally came to her senses she could not keep from crying bitterly.

"Oh, where can my Dora be?" she moaned. "Something dreadful has happened to her—I feel certain of it."

"Where is that note?" asked Dick.

"I left it on the mantelpiece in our dining room. It said: 'Dear Friend Dora: Meet me as

soon as you can down at the old boathouse on the lake. I have something important to tell you,' and it was signed 'Richard Rover.'"

"Mrs. Stanhope, as true as I stand here, I never wrote that note or sent it."

"I believe you, Dick. But who did send it?"

"Some enemy who wanted to get her away from the house—Dan Baxter or——" Dick paused.

"Or who?"

"Well, Josiah Crabtree, if you must know. He hates her and he wants to separate her from you."

At the mention of Josiah Crabtree's name a curious shiver passed over Mrs. Stanhope. "We —we'll not talk about Mr. Crabtree," she faltered. "But, oh, I must have my Dora back!" And then she came near to fainting again.

"I would like to go over to the Stanhope cottage and investigate," said Dick, after the lady had been placed in Mrs. Green's care. "To my mind it won't do to lose time, either."

"You can go, Richard," answered Captain Putnam. "But be careful and keep out of trouble."

"Can I take Tom and Sam with me?"

At this the master of Putnam Hall smiled broadly. "Always like to be together, eh? All right, I don't know but what it will be safer

for the three of you to go together," he said; and Dick lost no time in telling his brothers. In a few minutes the trio set off for the Stanhope cottage, little dreaming of the long time that was to elapse before they should see Putnam Hall again.

CHAPTER XV.

DICK'S BRAVERY AND ITS REWARD.

THE three Rover boys reached the Stanhope cottage on a run, to find nobody in charge but a washwoman, who was hanging up some clothing in the back yard.

Explaining the situation so far as was necessary, they went inside and hunted up the note Mrs. Stanhope had mentioned.

"I believe that is Dan Baxter's writing," said Dick slowly.

"It is," came from Sam. "I know it from the flourishes on the capitals. He was always great on flourishes."

"We won't waste time here," went on Dick. "Let us go down to the old boathouse."

They were soon on the way, along a road lined with brush and scrubby cedars, the trees which in years gone by had given Cedarville its name.

At the old boathouse everything was quiet and not a soul was in sight. Walking to the end of the house float they gazed out on the lake.

"Not a boat anywhere," murmured Dick.

"Now, what could have become of Dora, do you suppose?"

"It's ten to one that Baxter took her off in Mumps' boat!" cried Tom. "By jinks! I think I see through this. Don't you remember the plot Josiah Crabtree and Mumps were hatching? I'll wager they are all in this, to get Dora away from her mother."

"I believe Tom is right," came from Sam. "And if that is true, Dora was taken off on a boat beyond a doubt."

"If she was it won't take very long to find her," returned Dick. "Let us go to Cedarville and see if anybody has seen the *Falcon*."

Dick had scarcely spoken when a small steam tug hove into sight, bound up the lake.

"There's a tug now!" exclaimed Tom. "Hi there! hi!" he yelled. "Stop!"

The captain of the tug heard him and saw him waving his hand, and, slowing up, made a half-circle toward shore.

"What's wanted, young man?" he asked. "Anything wrong?"

"Yes, a good deal is wrong," replied Tom. "Have you seen a yacht named the *Falcon* to-day?"

"No, but I saw her late yesterday afternoon," was the reply.

"Around here?"

"No, further down the lake. I think she was bound for Cayuga."

"Did you notice who was on board?"

"You seem to be very particular about it."

"We are particular. A young lady has disappeared, and we think she was taken away on that yacht," explained Dick, as the steam tug came to a halt.

"Is that so? Yes, I did see a young lady on board of her. She called to our boat as we passed, but I thought it was only in fun."

"I guess she wanted you to help her," said Dick bitterly. Then he continued suddenly: "Have you anything to do just now?"

"No; I was going up to Ithaca to look for a tow."

"What will you charge to take us down to Cayuga?"

The captain of the tug thought for a moment.

"Three dollars. It ought to be worth that to find the young lady."

"We'll go you," answered Dick promptly. "Swing in and we'll jump aboard."

Captain Lambert did as requested, and in a moment more the three Rover boys were on board of the *Cedar Queen,* as the craft was named. The captain proved to be a nice man and became thor-

oughly interested in the story the lads had to tell.

"I hope we spot the rascals," he said. "I'll certainly do all I can for you."

The *Cedar Queen* was a little craft and somewhat slow, and the boys fretted a good bit at the long time it took to reach Cayuga.

When they ran into the harbor of the town at the foot of the lake they looked in vain for the *Falcon*.

"We'll take a sail around," said Captain Lambert; and this they did, continuing the hunt until long after dark.

"It's no use!" groaned Dick. "We've missed her."

It took nearly all the money the boys could scrape up between them to pay off the captain of the tug, and when they had been landed at one of the docks they wondered what they had best do next.

"We've got to stay here over night," said Dick. "We may as well telegraph to Captain Putnam for cash;" and this they did, and put up at one of the hotels.

The place was crowded, for there was a circus in the town and a public auction of real estate had also taken place that day. The boys could get only a small room, but over this they did not

complain. Their one thought was of Dora and of the rascals who had carried her off.

"We must get on the track somehow," said Dick. But how, was the question. He could not sleep, and after the others had retired took a long walk, just to settle his nerves.

Dick's walk brought him to the lot where the circus had held forth, and for some time he watched the men as they worked under the flaring gasoline torches, packing up what still remained on the grounds. The tent men had to labor like slaves in rolling up the huge stretches of canvas and in hoisting the long poles into the wagons, and he shook his head grimly as he turned away. "No circus life in mine," he mused—"at least, not that part of it."

Dick had moved away from the grounds but a short distance when his attention was attracted to the strange movements of two rough-looking individuals who were hurrying off with a third man between them.

"I don't want to go, I tell you," the middle man muttered; "I don't want more to drink."

"That's all right, Mr. Castor," said one of the other men glibly. "Just have one more glass, that's a good fellow."

"I won't take it, so there!" cried the man called Castor. "I know when I've had enough."

"You've got to come along with us," put in the third man savagely. "You owe us some money."

"I don't owe you a cent, Fusty."

"Yes, you do—and I'm bound to have it. Hold him, Mike, till I go through him."

Of a sudden there was a struggle, and the man called Castor found himself helpless, while the fellow called Fusty began to go through his pockets with great rapidity.

The scene alarmed Dick, and he wondered what he had best do. Then he made up his mind to go to Castor's assistance, and ran forward.

"Here, let that man alone!" he cried, as he picked up a fence picket which happened to lie handy. "Leave him alone, I say!"

"The Old Nick take the luck!" muttered one of the other men. "Who's this?"

"Help! help!" cried Castor.

"Let him alone, I say!" repeated Dick, and then struck at one of the men and hit him on the arm.

Seeing himself thus re-enforced, Castor also struck out, and continued to call for help.

"We might as well give it up, Fusty!" cried one of the rascals, and took to his heels, and then there was nothing to do for the other man but to follow him.

"Are you hurt?" asked Dick, as he helped the man who had been assaulted to his feet.

"Not much," was the slow reply. "Young man, you came in time and no more."

"Do you know those fellows who just ran away?"

"I met them at the circus this afternoon. We had several drinks and they became very friendly. I believe they were after my money."

"I think so too, Mr. ——"

"My name is George Castor. And who are you?"

"I am Dick Rover, sir."

"Rover, I must thank you for your services. I shan't forget you, not me!" and George Castor held out his hand cordially. "I think I made a mistake by drinking with those fellows."

"I haven't any doubt of it, Mr. Castor."

"Do you reside in town?"

"No, sir; I am stopping at the hotel with my brothers. We just came into town to-night on rather a curious errand."

"Indeed, and what was that?"

In a few words Dick explained the situation. He had not yet finished when George Castor interrupted him.

"My boy, you have done me a good turn, and now I think I can return the compliment."

"Do you mean to say you know something of this case?" demanded Dick eagerly.

"Perhaps I do. Describe this Dan Baxter as well as you can, will you?"

"Certainly." And Dick did so.

"It is the same fellow. I met him last night, down near the lumber wharves. You see, I am a lumber merchant from Brooklyn, and I have an interest in a lumber company up here."

"You saw Baxter? Was he alone?"

"No, there was another man with him, a tall, slim fellow, with an unusually sour face."

"Josiah Crabtree to a T!" burst out Dick. "Did you notice where they went?"

"I did not. But I overheard their talk. They spoke about a boat on the Hudson River, the *Fly-away*. They were to join her at Albany."

"Who was to join her?"

"This Baxter, if it was he, and somebody else —a man called Muff, or something like that."

"Mumps! You struck them, sure enough! But did they say anything about the girl?"

"The tall man said that he would see to it that she was there—whatever he meant by that."

"I can't say any more than you, Mr. Castor. But I guess they are going to carry Dora Stanhope through to Albany, from all appearances."

"Then perhaps you had better follow."

"I'd go at once if I had the money that I have telegraphed for. You see, my brothers and I came away in a hurry, for the Stanhopes are close friends of ours."

"Don't let the matter of money worry you. Do you know how much I have with me?"

"I haven't the slightest idea, sir."

"Nearly eleven hundred dollars—and if those rascals had had the chance they would have robbed me of every dollar of it."

"I shouldn't think you would carry so much."

"I don't usually; but I was paid a large bill to-day, and went to the circus instead of the bank—not having seen such a show in years. But to come back to business. Will a hundred dollars see you through?"

"You mean to say you will loan me that much?"

"Perhaps I had better give it to you, as a reward for your services."

"I won't take it, for I don't want any reward. But I'll accept a loan, if you'll make it, and be very much obliged to you," continued Dick.

"All right, then, we'll call it a loan," concluded George Castor, and the transfer of the amount was made on the spot. Later on Dick insisted upon returning the money.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEARCH FOR THE "FLYAWAY."

"TOM! Sam! Get up at once!"

"What's the row now, Dick?" came sleepily from Tom. "Have you discovered anything?"

"Yes, I've discovered a whole lot. Get up if you want to catch the next train."

"The next train for where?" demanded Tom, as he hopped out of bed.

"The next train for Albany."

"Have they taken Dora to Albany?" questioned Sam, as he too arose and began to don his garments.

"I think so," was the elder brother's reply, and while the pair dressed, Dick told of what had occurred and what he had heard.

"This is getting to be quite a chase," was Tom's remark. "But I reckon you are right, and we'll land on them in the capital."

"If we aren't too late," answered Dick.

"I'd like to know how they are going to take Dora to Albany if she doesn't want to go?" came

from Tom, when they were dressed and on their way to the railroad station.

No one could answer this question. "Josiah Crabtree is a queer stick and can do lots of queer things," was what Dick said.

The train left at half-past two in the morning, and they had not long to wait. Once on board, they proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as possible, each having a whole seat to himself, and Sam and Tom went to sleep without much trouble. But Dick was wide awake, wondering what would be the next move on reaching Albany. "Poor Dora!" he murmured. "Oh, but that crowd shall be punished for this! If she comes to harm it will almost kill Mrs. Stanhope." And his heart sank like a lump of lead as he thought of his dearest friend in the power of her unscrupulous enemies.

It was just getting daylight when the long train rolled into the spacious depot at the State capital. Only a few working people and newsboys were stirring. Tom and Sam pulled themselves together with long yawns.

"Sleeping in a seat doesn't come up to a bed, by any means," remarked Tom. "Which way now?"

"We'll go down to the river and look for the *Flyaway*," answered his elder brother.

"It will be like looking for a pin in a haystack," said Sam. "The boats are pretty thick here."

"That is true, but it is the best we can do," replied the elder Rover.

Once along the river front they began a careful inquiry concerning the boat of which they were in search.

"Not much progress," remarked Tom, after two hours had been spent in vain. "This climbing from one dock to the next is decidedly tiring."

"And I'm hungry," put in Sam. "I move we hunt up a restaurant."

An eating place was not far away, and, entering, they ordered a morning meal of ham and eggs, rolls, and hot coffee.

While they were eating a man came in and sat down close by them. It was Martin Harris, the fellow who had come to their assistance after the collision between the *Spray* and the *Falcon*.

"Hullo, how are you?" he said heartily. "Still cruising around in your yacht?"

"No, we just got back to Albany," replied Dick. "We've been to school since we left you."

"I see. How do you like going back to your studies?"

"We liked it well enough," put in Tom. "But we left in a hurry," he went on, thinking Martin Harris might give them some information. "Have you been out on the river yet this morning?"

"Yes; just came up from our place below to do a little trading."

"Did you see anything of a yacht called the *Flyaway?*"

"The *Flyaway?* What sort of a looking craft is she?"

"I can't tell you that."

"One boat there attracted my attention," said Martin Harris slowly. "I saw two boys and a girl on board of her."

"How was the girl dressed?" cried Dick.

"She had on a light-blue dress and a sailor hat."

"And the boys?"

"One was dressed in gray and the other in dark-blue or black."

"That was the boat! Where did she go?" ejaculated Dick, who remembered well how Mumps and Baxter had been attired, and the pretty dress and hat Dora was in the habit of wearing.

"She was bound straight down the river."

"We must follow her."

"That's the talk!" burst out Tom. "But how?"

"What do you want to follow the *Flyaway* for?" asked Martin Harris curiously.

"Those two boys are running away with that girl."

"Impossible!"

"No, it isn't. One of the fellows—the fellow in dark clothing—is the chap who ran into us that day."

"Well, now, do you know I thought it looked like him," was Harris' comment. "And, come to think of it, that boat got as far away from me as she could."

"Do you think you would know her again—I mean the *Flyaway*—if we got anywhere near her?" asked Dick.

"I think I would, lad. She had a rather dirty mainsail and jib, and each had a new patch of white near the top. Then, too, her rig is a little different from what we have around here. Looked like a Southern boat."

"Have you your boat handy?"

"Yes, she's right at the end of this street. Do you want me to follow up that crowd?"

"Could your boat catch the *Flyaway,* do you think?"

"My boat, the *Searchlight,* is as good a yacht

as there is anywhere around, if I do say it myself," answered Martin Harris promptly. "If you don't believe it, try her and see."

"We will try her," came promptly from Dick. "And the sooner you begin the chase the better it will suit me."

"All right; we'll start as soon as I've swallowed this coffee," answered the skipper of the *Searchlight*. "But, hold on, this may prove a long search."

"Do you want to make terms?"

"I wasn't thinking of that. I'll leave it to you as to what the job is worth, after we're done. I was thinking that I haven't any provender aboard my yacht, if we want to stay out any length of time."

"I'll fix that," answered Dick. "Come, Sam. You say the yacht is at the foot of the street?"

"Yes."

"We'll be there in less than five minutes."

"Where are you going—to buy provisions?"

"Yes."

Dick made off, followed not only by Sam, but likewise by Tom. He found a large grocery close at hand, and here purchased some coffee, sugar, canned meat and fish, a small quantity of vegetables, and also several loaves of bread and some salt. To this Tom added a box of crackers

and Sam some cake and fruit, and with their arms loaded down they hurried to the *Searchlight.*

Martin Harris was on hand and ready to cast off. "Hullo, you did lay in some things!" he grinned. "I reckon you calculate this chase to last some time."

"We've got enough for several days, anyway —that is, all but water," returned Dick.

"I've got a whole barrel full of that forward, lad."

"Then we are ready to leave. I hope, though, we run the *Flyaway* down before noon," concluded the elder Rover, as he hopped on board.

Leaving Sam to stow away the stores as he saw fit, Dick and Tom sprang in to assist Martin Harris, and soon the mainsail and jib were set, and they turned away from the dock and began the journey down the Hudson. As soon as they were clear of the other boats, the skipper set his topsail and flying jib, and they bowled along at a merry gait, the wind being very nearly in their favor and neither too strong nor too slack.

"Now I'd like to hear the particulars of this case," remarked Martin Harris, as he proceeded to make himself comfortable at the tiller. "You see, I want to know just what I am doing. I don't want to get into any trouble with the law."

"You won't get into any trouble. Nobody

has a right to run off with a girl against her will," replied Dick.

"That's true. But why are they running off with her?"

"I think they have been hired to do it by a man who wants to marry the girl's mother," went on Dick, and related the particulars of what had occurred.

Martin Harris was deeply interested. "I reckon you have the best end of it," he said, when the youth had finished. "And you say this Dan Baxter is a son of the rascal who is suspected of robbing Rush & Wilder?"

"Yes."

"Evidently a hard crowd."

"You are right—and they ought all of them to be in prison," observed Tom. "By the way, have they heard anything of those robbers?"

"The detectives are following up one or two clews. One report was that this Baxter and Girk had gone to some place on Staten Island. But I don't think they know for certain."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH DORA IS CARRIED OFF.

PERHAPS it will be as well to go back a bit and learn how poor Dora was enticed into leaving home so unexpectedly, to the sorrow of her mother and the anxiety of Dick and her other friends.

Dora was hard at work sweeping out the parlor of the Stanhope cottage when she saw from the window a boy walking up the garden path. The youth was a stranger to her and carried a letter in his hand.

"Is this Mrs. Stanhope's place?" he questioned, as Dora appeared.

"Yes."

"Here's a letter for Miss Dora Stanhope," and he held out the missive.

"Whom is it from?"

"I don't know. A boy down by the lake gave it to me," was the answer, and without further words the lad hurried off, having received instructions that he must not tarry around the place after the delivery of the communication.

Tearing open the letter Dora read it with deep interest.

"What can Dick have to tell me?" she mused. "Can it be something about Mr. Crabtree? It must be."

Dropping her work, she ran upstairs, changed her dress, put on her hat, and started for the boathouse.

It took her but a short while to reach the place, but to her surprise nobody was in sight.

"Can I have made some mistake?" she murmured; when the *Falcon* hove into view from around a bend in the shore line.

"Is that Miss Stanhope?" shouted a strange man, who seemed to be the sole occupant of the craft.

"Yes, I am Dora Stanhope," answered the girl.

"Dick Rover sent me over from the other side of the lake. He told me if I saw you to take you over to Nelson Point."

Nelson Point was a grove situated directly opposite Cedarville. It was a place much used by excursionists and picnic parties.

"Thank you," said Dora, never suspecting that anything was wrong. "If you'll come in a little closer I will go with you."

The *Falcon* was brought in, and Dora leaped on board of the yacht.

She had scarcely done so when Mumps and Dan Baxter stepped from the cabin.

"Oh, dear!" she gasped. "Where—where did you come from?"

"Didn't quite expect to see us here, did you?" grinned the former bully of Putnam Hall.

"I did not," answered Dora coldly. "What—where is Dick Rover?"

"Over to Nelson Point."

"Did he send you over here for me?"

"Of course he did," said Mumps.

"I do not believe it. This is some trick!" burst out the girl. "I want you to put me on shore again."

"You can't go ashore now," answered Baxter. "Ease her off, Goss."

"Right you are," answered Bill Goss. "What's the course now?"

"Straight down the lake."

"All right."

"You are not going to take me down the lake!" cried Dora in increased alarm.

"Yes, we are."

"I—I won't go!"

"I don't see how you are to help yourself," responded Baxter roughly.

"Dan Baxter, you are a brute!"

"If you can't say anything better than that, you had better say nothing!" muttered Baxter.

"I will say what I please. You have no right to carry me off in this fashion."

"Well, I took the right."

"You shall be locked up for it."

"You'll have to place me in the law's hands first."

"I don't believe Dick Rover sent that letter at all."

"You can believe what you please."

"You forged his name to it."

"Let us talk about something else."

"You are as bad as your father, and that is saying a good deal," went on the poor girl bitterly.

"See here, don't you dare to speak of my father!" roared the bully in high anger. "My father is as good as anybody. This is only a plot against him—gotten up by the Rovers and his other enemies."

Dan Baxter's manner was so terrible that Dora sank back on a camp stool nearly overcome. Then, seeing some men at a distance, on the shore, she set up a scream for help.

"Here, none of that!" ejaculated Mumps, and clapped his hand over her mouth.

"Let me go!" she screamed. "Help! help!"

"We'll put her in the cabin," ordered Dan Baxter, and also caught hold of Dora. She struggled with all the strength at her command, but was as a baby in their grasp, and soon found herself in the cabin, with the door closed and locked behind her.

It was then that her nerves gave way, and, throwing herself on a couch, she burst into tears.

"What will they do with me?" she moaned. "Oh, that I was home again!"

It was a long while before she could compose herself sufficiently to sit up. In the meantime the *Falcon* was sailing down the lake toward Cayuga with all speed.

"This must be some plan of Josiah Crabtree to get me away from home," she thought. "Poor mother! I wonder what will happen to her while I am away? If that man gets her to marry him what will I do? I can never live with them—never!" And she heaved a deep sigh.

Presently she arose and walked to the single window of which the cabin boasted. It was open, but several little iron bars had been screwed fast on the outside.

"They have me like a bird in a cage," she thought. "Where will this dreadful adventure end?"

Hour after hour went by and she was not molested. Then came a knock on the cabin door.

"Dora! Dora Stanhope!" came in Dan Baxter's voice.

"Well?"

"Will you behave yourself if I unlock the door?"

"It is you who ought to behave yourself," she retorted.

"Never mind about that. I have something for you to eat."

"I don't want a mouthful." And Dora spoke the truth, for the food would have choked her.

"You had better have a sandwich and a glass of milk."

"If you want to do something, give me a glass of water," she said finally, for she wished a drink badly, the cabin was so hot and stuffy.

Baxter went away, and presently unlocked the door and handed her the water, of which she drank eagerly.

"Where are you going to take me?" she questioned, as she passed back the glass.

"You'll learn that all in good time, Dora. Come, why not take the whole matter easy?" went on the bully, as he dropped into a seat near her.

"How can I take it easy?"

"We won't hurt you—I'll give you my word on that."

She was about to say that his word was not worth giving, but restrained herself. If she angered Baxter, there was no telling what the fellow might do.

"Is this a plot of Josiah Crabtree's?" she asked sharply.

Baxter started. "How did you——" he began, and stopped short. "You had better not ask any questions."

"Which means that you will not answer any?"

"You can take it that way if you want to, Dora."

"It was a mean trick you played on me."

"Let us talk of something else. We are going to leave the *Falcon* soon, and I want to know if you are going with us quietly?"

"Leave the *Falcon?*"

"Yes, at Cayuga."

"Are we there already?" gasped Dora in dismay.

"We soon will be."

"I don't wish to go with you."

"But we want you to go. If you go quietly all will be well—and I'll promise to see you safe home in less than twenty-four hours."

"You wish to keep me away from home that length of time?"

"If you must know, yes."

"And why? So Josiah Crabtree can—can——" She did not finish.

"So that Mr. Crabtree can interview your mother—yes," put in Mumps, who had just appeared. "Baxter, there's no use in beating around the bush. Crabtree is bound to marry Mrs. Stanhope, and Dora may as well know it now as later."

CHAPTER XVIII.

STILL IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

"THAT man will never marry my mother with my consent!" burst out the unhappy girl.

"She probably won't ask your consent," sneered Mumps.

"She would not marry him if I was with her. He only has an influence over her when I am away."

"Exactly—and he knows that," put in Baxter.

"Do you mean to say Josiah Crabtree is going to marry her now?" demanded Dora, springing to her feet.

"More than likely."

"Then he—he hired you to carry me off?"

"We'll talk about something else," said the bully. "Will you leave the *Falcon* quietly?"

"Where do you want me to go?"

"To the home of an old lady who will treat you as nicely as she possibly can."

Dora shook her head. "I don't wish to go anywhere excepting home, and I won't submit a bit longer than I have to."

"Don't be foolish!" exclaimed Mumps. "We

might treat you a good deal worse if we were of a mind to do so. Crabtree told us to bind and gag you."

"He did!"

"Yes. He says you are a perfect minx."

A few words more followed, and then both of the boys left the cabin.

"She won't submit," whispered Mumps. "What had we best do?"

"Use the drug Crabtree gave us," answered Baxter. "It's a lucky thing I brought that vial."

"Yes—if we don't have any trip-up in the matter," answered the toady, with a doubtful shake of his head. Mumps had gone into the whole scheme rather unwillingly, but now saw no way of backing out.

A little later the *Falcon* ran into the harbor of Cayuga and came to anchor close to one of the docks. Then Baxter appeared with some sandwiches and a glass of milk.

"You might as well eat; it's foolish not to," he said, and set the food on a little stand.

By this time Dora was very hungry, and as soon as the bully had left she applied herself to what had been brought. Poor creature, she did not know that both sandwiches and milk had been doctored with a drug calculated to make her very dull and sleepy!

She had hardly finished the scant meal when her eyes began to grow heavy. Then her brain seemed to become clouded and she could scarcely remember where she was.

"Here's news!" cried Baxter, coming in an hour later. "We are to join your mother and Mr. Crabtree at Albany."

"At Albany?" she repeated slowly. "Have —have they gone there?"

"Yes; they are going on a honeymoon on the yacht *Flyaway*. Your mother wants you to join her and forgive her."

Dora heaved a long sigh. "I cannot! I cannot!" she sobbed, and burst again into tears.

Nevertheless, she allowed herself to be led off the *Falcon* and to the depot. "Your face is full of tears," said Baxter. "Here, put this veil over it," and she was glad enough to do as bidden, that folks might not stare at her.

What happened afterward was very much like a dream to her. She remembered entering the cars and crouching down in a seat, with Baxter beside her. A long ride in the night followed, and she slept part of the way, although troubled with a horrible nightmare. She wanted to flee, but seemed to lack both the physical and mental strength to do so.

The ride at an end, Baxter and Mumps almost

carried her to the river. Here the *Flyaway* was in waiting. Bill Goss had gone on ahead and notified his wife that she was wanted. It may as well be added here that Mrs. Goss was as coarse and unprincipled as her husband.

When Dora's mind was once more clear she found herself in a much larger cabin than that she had formerly occupied. She lay on a couch, and Mrs. Goss, a fat, ugly-looking creature, sat beside her.

"Are you awake, dear?" asked the woman as smoothly as she could.

"Who—who are you?" asked Dora feebly.

"I am Mrs. Goss."

"I don't know you. Where—where is my mother—and Mr. Crabtree?"

"You'll have to ask Mr. Baxter or Mr. Fenwick about that."

"Do you belong on this boat?"

"I do, when I go out with my husband."

"Was he the man who was with those boys?"

"Yes."

"Where are we now?"

"On the Hudson River, just below Albany."

"Where are they going to take me next?"

"You had better ask Mr. Baxter. I was only brought on board to wait on you."

"Then that means that they wish to take me quite a distance!" cried Dora, and ran on deck.

Mumps and Baxter were talking earnestly together near the bow. At once she ran to them.

"Where is my mother?"

"You'll see her soon," answered the former bully of Putnam Hall.

"It was another trick of yours!" burst out Dora. "And I—I think you gave me something last night to make me sleepy."

"What if we did?" came from Mumps. "You are all right now."

"I do not want to go another step with you." Dora looked around and saw a strange boat passing. "Help! help!" she screamed.

At once there was another row, in which not only the boys, but also Bill Goss and his wife, took a hand. In the end poor Dora was marched to the cabin and put under lock and key.

If the girl had been disheartened before, she was now absolutely downcast.

"They have me utterly in their power!" she moaned over and over again. "Heaven alone knows where they will take me!" And then she sank down on her knees and prayed that God might see her safely through her perils.

Her prayer seemed to calm her, and she felt that

there was at least one Power that would never desert her.

"Poor, poor mamma, how I wish I knew what was happening to her!" she murmured.

Slowly the hours went by. Mrs. Goss came and went, and Dora was even allowed to go on deck whenever no other boat was close at hand. Thus Martin Harris saw her; but, as we know, that meeting amounted to nothing.

It was Mrs. Goss who served the meals, and as Dora could not starve, she was compelled to eat what was set before her, the fare being anything but elaborate.

"Sorry, but we haven't got a hotel chef on board," observed Dan Baxter, as he came in during the supper hour. "But I'll try to get something better on board at New York."

"Do you mean to say you intend to take me away down to that city?" queried Dora.

"Humph! we are going further than that."

"And to where?"

"Wait and see."

"Are you afraid to tell me?"

"I don't think it would be a wise thing to do."

"We are just going to take a short ocean trip——" began Mumps, when Baxter stopped him.

"Don't talk so much—you'll spoil everything," remarked the bully.

"An ocean trip!" burst out Dora. "No! no! I do not wish to go on the ocean."

"As I said before, I think you'll go where the yacht goes."

"Does my mother know anything of this?"

"She knows you are away," grinned Mumps.

"You need not tell me that!" exclaimed Dora. "You are a mean, mean boy, so there!" And she turned on her heel and walked off.

She wished she had learned how to swim. They were running quite close to shore, and she felt that a good swimmer could gain land without much effort. Then a man came out from shore in a large flatboat.

"Help! help!" she cried. "Save me, and I will reward you well! They are carrying me away from home!"

"What's that?" called out the man, and Dora repeated her words before any of the others could stop her.

"All right, I'll do what I can for you," said the man, and running up beside the yacht, which had become caught in a sudden calm, he made fast with a boathook.

CHAPTER XIX.

DORA TRIES TO ESCAPE.

"Now we are in a pickle!" whispered Mumps. "That man may cause us a whole lot of trouble."

"You let me do the talking," answered Dan Baxter. "Help Goss get her back to the cabin."

"I won't go back!" screamed Dora. "Let me be!" And she ran for the rail.

But Mumps caught hold of her and dragged her back. Then Bill Goss approached, followed by his wife.

"You must go below, miss," said the sailor. "Come, Nancy, give us a lift."

Poor Dora found herself at once surrounded and shoved back. She tried to call out again, but Mumps checked her with that ever-ready hand of his.

"Be careful!" shouted Baxter, for the benefit of the man on the flatboat. "Treat her with care, poor girl!"

"All right," grinned Mumps. "Come, down you go," he went on, to Dora, and literally forced her down the companionway.

Once in the cabin she was left in Mrs. Goss'

care. The door was locked, and Goss and Mumps went on deck to learn what Baxter was doing.

"What does this mean?" asked the man in the flatboat. He was a farmer, who had just been taking a load of hay across the stream.

"Oh, it's all right," answered Baxter carelessly. "That's my sister."

"Your sister?"

"Yes."

"What's the row?"

"No row at all—excepting that I am trying to get her back to the asylum."

"Is she crazy?"

"A little bit; but not near as bad as she used to be. She got out of the asylum in Brooklyn yesterday, and I've had my hands full trying to get her back. She imagines she is a sea captain and always runs off with my uncle's yacht."

"I see. That's putty bad for your family."

"Oh, yes; but we are getting used to it. Take care, we are going to swing around."

Never suspecting that he had been regaled with a string of falsehoods, the farmer let go with his boathook, and yacht and flatboat speedily drifted apart.

It was with a big sigh of relief that Dan Baxter saw the flatboat recede in the distance.

"That was a narrow shave," he muttered. "If that fellow had insisted on talking to Dora there might have been a whole lot of trouble."

In vain Dora waited for the man to come on board. He had said that he would do what he could for her. Surely he would not desert her!

But as the time slipped by her heart failed her and she gave herself up to another crying spell. This caused Mumps and Goss to withdraw, and she was left alone again with Mrs. Goss.

"Where are we now?" she asked at length.

"We are approaching New York," was the answer.

"And that man, what of him?"

"Oh, he didn't come on board."

It was night when the *Flyaway* came to a landing near the upper portion of the metropolis.

The boys and Bill Goss went ashore, leaving Dora in Mrs. Goss' care.

"Be careful and don't let her escape," cautioned Dan Baxter. "We won't be gone very long."

Baxter had left for a telegraph office, expecting to receive a message from Josiah Crabtree.

For half an hour Mrs. Goss sat in the cabin watching Dora, who was pacing the floor impatiently.

"Make yourself comfortable, miss," said the

woman. "It won't do you any good to get all worked up over the matter."

"You do not understand my situation, Mrs. Goss," faltered Dora. "If you did understand I am sure you wouldn't keep me a prisoner in this fashion."

"I am only obeying orders, miss. If I didn't my Bill would almost kill me."

"Is he so harsh to you?"

"He is now. But he didn't used to be—when he didn't drink."

"Then he drinks now?"

"Yes; twice over what is good for him."

"Where have they gone?"

"To a telegraph office."

"Didn't they say they would be back soon?"

"Yes."

Dora said no more, but sank down on the couch. Then an idea came to her mind, and lying back she closed her eyes and pretended to go to sleep.

The woman watched her closely for a while; then, satisfied that the girl had really dropped off, gave a long sigh of relief.

"I guess I can get a little sleep myself," she muttered. "I think I deserve it."

She locked the cabin door carefully and placed the key in her pocket.

Then she stretched out in an easy chair with her feet on a low stool.

Dora watched her out of the corner of her eyes as a cat watches a mouse.

Was the woman really sleeping?

Soon Mrs. Goss' breathing became loud and irregular.

"She must be asleep," thought Dora, and stirred slightly.

Mrs. Goss took no notice of this, and with her heart in her throat the girl slipped noiselessly from her resting place and stood up.

Still the woman took no notice, and now Dora found herself confronted by a most difficult task.

Without the key to the cabin door she could do nothing, and how to obtain the much coveted article was a problem.

With trembling hands she sought the pocket of Mrs. Goss' dress only to find that the woman was sitting on the key!

"Oh, dear, this is the worst yet!" she murmured.

As she stood in the middle of the cabin in perplexity, her captor gave a long sigh and turned partly over in her chair.

The pocket was now free and within easy reach, and with deft fingers Dora drew the key forth and tiptoed her way to the cabin door.

She was so agitated that she could scarcely place the key in the keyhole.

The lock had been used but seldom, and the action of the salt air had rusted it greatly.

As the key turned there was a grating sound, which caused Mrs. Goss to awaken with a start.

"What's the matter? Who is there?" she cried, and turned around to face the cabin door. "Come back here! Come back!"

She started after Dora, who now had the cabin door wide open. Away went girl and woman up the low stairs. But Dora was the more agile of the two, and terror lent speed to her limbs.

On the deck, however, she came to a pause. The *Flyaway* was a good six feet from the dock, and between lay a stretch of dark, murky water the sight of which made her shiver. What if she should fall in? She felt that she would surely be drowned.

But as Mrs. Goss came closer her terror increased. She felt that if she was caught she would be treated more harshly than ever for having attempted to run away.

"I'll take the chances!" she thought, and leaped as best she could. Her feet struck the very edge of the stringpiece beyond and for an instant it looked as if she must go over. But she

clutched at a handy spile and quickly drew herself to a place of safety.

And yet safety was but temporary, for Mrs. Goss followed her in her leap and struck the dock directly behind her.

"Come back, you minx!" she cried, and caught Dora by the skirt.

"I won't come back! Let me be!" screamed the girl, and tore herself loose, ripping her garment at the same time. Then she started up the dock as swiftly as her trembling limbs would carry her.

But fate was against her, for as she gained the very head of the dock, Bill Goss appeared, followed by Baxter and Mumps.

"Hullo, who's this?" cried the sailor. "The gal, sure as you are born!"

"She is running away!" called out Mrs. Goss. "Stop her!"

"Here, this will never do," roared Dan Baxter. "Come here, Dora Stanhope!" and he made a clutch at her.

Soon the two boys were in pursuit, with the sailor close behind. Fortunately for the evildoers the spot was practically deserted, so that Dora could summon no assistance, even though she began to call for help at the top of her lungs.

The girl had covered less than a half-block when Baxter ranged up alongside of her.

"This won't work!" he said roughly. "Come back," and he held her tight.

"Let me go!" she screamed. "Help! help!"

"Close her mouth!" put in Mumps. "If this keeps on we'll have the police down on us in no time!"

Again his hand was placed over Dora's mouth, while Baxter caught her from behind. Then Goss came up.

"We'll have to carry her," said the former bully of Putnam Hall. "Take her by the feet."

"Wot's the meanin' o' this?" cried a voice out of the darkness, and the crowd found themselves confronted by a dirty-looking tramp who had been sleeping behind a pile of empty hogsheads.

"Help me!" cried Dora. "Bring the police! Tell them I am Dora Stanhope of Cedarville, and that I——"

She could get no further, for Mumps cut her short.

"Dora Stanhope," repeated the tramp. "If I——"

"You forget this, my man," said Baxter. "Here's half a dollar for you. This lady is my

cousin who is crazy. She just escaped from an asylum."

"T'anks!" came from the tramp, and he pocketed the money in a hurry. Then he ran off in the darkness.

"He's going to tell the police anyway!" cried Goss. "You had better get away from here."

"You are right," responded Mumps. "Hurry up; I don't want to be arrested."

As quickly as it could be done they carried Dora aboard of the yacht and bundled her into the cabin.

"Now keep her there!" cried Baxter to Mrs. Goss. "After we are off you can explain how she got away."

"She hit me with a stick and knocked me down," said the woman glibly. "She shan't get away a second time."

Once again poor Dora found herself a prisoner on board of the *Flyaway*. Then the lines were cast off, the sails set, and they stood off in the darkness, down New York Bay and straight for the ocean beyond.

CHAPTER XX.

A LONG CHASE BEGUN.

As they journeyed down the Hudson the boys and Martin Harris scanned the river eagerly for some sign of the *Flyaway*.

"It's ten to one she put down a pretty good distance," remarked Dick. "They wouldn't bring Dora over here unless they were bound for New York or some other place as far or further."

"I believe you," said Tom. "But she may be delayed, and if what Harris says is true the *Searchlight* ought to make better time than Baxter's craft."

Several miles were covered, when Sam, who had just come up from the cabin, called attention to a farmer who was ferrying a load of hay across the river.

"If he's been at that sort of work all day he may know something of the *Flyaway*," he suggested.

"We'll hail him, anyway," said Tom. "It won't do any harm, providing we don't lose any time."

So the farmer was hailed and asked if he had seen anything of the craft.

"Waal now, I jest guess I did," he replied. "They war havin' great times on board of her —a-takin' care of that crazy gal."

"A crazy girl!" cried Dick. "Who said she was crazy?"

"One of the young men. He said she was his sister and had escaped from some asylum. She called to me to help her. But I don't want nuthin' to do with crazy gals. My wife's cousin was out of his head and he cut up high jinks around the house, a-threatenin' folks with a butcher knife."

"That girl was not crazy, though, as it happens," said Dick coldly. "That villain was carrying her away from home against her will. She was no relation to him."

"By gosh!" The farmer's face fell and he stared at the youth blankly. "You are certain of this?"

"Yes. We are after the crowd now. If we catch them we'll put them in prison, just as sure as you are the greatest greeny we ever met," continued Dick, and motioned to Harris to continue the journey.

The farmer wanted to "talk back," as the saying is, but could find no words. "Well, maybe

I deserved it," he muttered to himself. "I was tuk in, no doubt on't." And he continued to ferry his hay load along.

"Well, we are on the right track, that's one satisfaction," said Tom. "That farmer couldn't have done much against a man and two big boys."

"He could have gone ashore and got help," replied Dick. "But he was so green he took in all that was told to him for simple truth. How Dan Baxter must have laughed over the way his ruse worked!"

"Yes, and Mumps too," added Sam. "Say, we ought to punch their heads well for them when we catch them."

"Let us get our eggs before we cook them," said Tom. "By the way, I'm getting hungry."

"Ditto," came from Harris. "Will you boys see what you can offer? I don't like to leave the tiller, for I know just how to get the best speed out of the *Searchlight*."

"I'll get up some kind of a meal," said Sam, who had played cook on many previous occasions.

Inside of half an hour he had the table set and Harris was called down, Dick taking his place. By the time all hands had been served they were in sight of upper New York City.

"Now we had better take in some sail," said the old sailor. "The yachts are pretty thick

around here and we will miss the *Flyaway* without half trying unless we are careful."

By the time it was dark they were pretty well down the water front of the metropolis. A consultation was held, and it was decided to lower the mainsail and topsail and leave only the jib flying.

"We can't go much further to-night, anyway," said Harris. "I don't know but what it may be as well to tie up somewhere."

"We'll have to do that unless we can catch some sort of clew," responded Dick gloomily. "If they have taken her to some place in New York we'll have a big job to find her."

A half-hour passed, and they were on the point of turning in at a dock when Tom gave a cry.

"Look! look!"

"What's up, Tom!" came from Dick and Sam simultaneously.

"Is that the *Flyaway?*"

All gave a look and saw a large yacht moving away from a dock just below where they had thought to stop.

"Call Harris!" cried Dick, and Sam ran to the cabin for the sailor, who had just gone below.

"I reckon that's our boat," said Martin Harris, after a quick look.

"Hark!" cried Dick, and held up his hand. "That's Dan Baxter's voice, just as sure as fate."

"I believe you," returned Sam. "Come, we can run her down in no time."

As quickly as it could be accomplished the course of the *Searchlight* was changed.

But the tall buildings of the city cut off a good deal of wind, and it took several minutes before they could get their sails filled.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted Tom, before Dick could stop him. "Is that the *Flyaway?*"

"That's Tom Rover!" came back, in Mumps' voice. "They have tracked us, after all!"

"Tom, what made you call?" demanded Dick in disgust. "We might have sneaked upon them unawares."

"Never mind, I reckon we can catch them anyhow," returned Tom, but he was crestfallen, nevertheless, as he realized the truth of his elder brother's observation. "Crowd on the sail, Harris."

"That's what I am a-doin'," came from the sailor. "We'll catch 'em before they gain the Battery."

"Yes, but we must be careful," said Dick. "We don't want to have a collision with some other boat."

"No, indeed," put in Sam. "Why, if one of those big ferryboats ran into us there would be nothing left of the *Searchlight*."

"You jest trust me," came from Martin Harris. "I know my business, and there won't be any accidents."

"The other yacht is making for the Jersey shore," cried Sam, a little later. "If we don't look out we'll lose her. There she goes behind a big ferryboat."

"She's going to try to bother us," grumbled Martin Harris, as he received a warning whistle from the ferryboat and threw the yacht over on the opposite tack. "The fellow who is sailing that boat knows his business."

"It's that Bill Goss, I suppose," said Tom. "There they go behind another ferryboat."

"It won't matter, so long as we keep her in sight," said Harris. "We are bound to run her down sooner or later."

Inside of half an hour the two boats had passed the Statue of Liberty. The course of the *Fly-away* was now straight down the bay, and the Rover boys began to wonder where Dan Baxter and his crowd might be bound.

"They must have Dora a close prisoner," mused Dick, with a sad shake of his head. "That is, if they didn't leave her in New York," he added suddenly.

"Do you suppose they did that?" asked Sam.

"Perhaps—there is no guessing what they did."

"We missed it by not telegraphing back to the authorities at Cedarville to arrest Josiah Crabtree," said Tom. "I think we can prove that he is in this game before the curtain falls on the last act."

"We'll telegraph when we get back," answered Dick, never thinking of all that was to happen ere they should see the metropolis again.

Gradually the lights of the city faded from view and they found themselves traveling down the bay at a rate of five to six knots an hour.

"We don't seem to be gaining," remarked Tom, after a long silence. "I can just about make her out and that's all."

"But we are gaining, and you'll find it so pretty soon," answered Martin Harris. "They had the advantage in dodging among those other boats, but now we've got a clear stretch before us."

On and on went the two yachts, until the *Flyaway* was not over five hundred feet ahead of the *Searchlight*.

"What did I tell you?" said Harris. "We'll overtake her in less than quarter of an hour."

"This is a regular yacht race," smiled Dick grimly. "But it's for more than the American Cup."

"Keep off!" came suddenly from ahead. "Keep off, or it will be the worse for you!"

It was Dan Baxter who was shouting at them. The former bully of Putnam Hall stood at the stern rail of the *Flyaway* and was using his hands like a trumpet.

"You had better give up the race, Baxter!" called Dick in return. "You can't get away from us, no matter how hard you try."

"Keep off!" repeated Baxter. "We won't stand any nonsense."

"We are not here for nonsense," put in Tom. "What have you done with Dora Stanhope?"

"Don't know anything about Dora Stanhope," came back from Mumps.

"You have her on board of your boat."

"It's a falsehood."

"Then you left her somewhere in New York."

"We haven't seen her at all," put in Baxter. "If you are looking for her you are on the wrong trail. She went away with Josiah Crabtree."

"Did he take her to Albany?"

"No. They went West."

"We do not believe you, Baxter," said Dick warmly. "You are one of the greatest rascals I ever met,—not counting your father,—and the best thing you can do is to surrender. If you don't you'll have to take the consequences."

"And we warn you to keep off. If you don't we'll shoot at you," was the somewhat surprising response.

"No, no; please don't shoot at them!" came in Dora's voice. "I beg of you not to shoot!"

She had escaped from Mrs. Goss' custody and now ranged up alongside of Dan Baxter and her other enemies who were handling the *Flyaway*. Her hair was flying wildly over her shoulders and she trembled so she could scarcely stand.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MEETING IN THE BAY.

"THERE is Dora now!" cried Dick, and his heart leaped into his throat at the sight of his dearest friend.

"Dick Rover, are you there?" came from the girl in nervous tones.

"Yes, Dora, I am here, with my brothers and a sailor friend."

"Save me, please!"

"We will!" came from all of the Rover boys in concert.

"Take her below!" roared Baxter angrily, as he turned to Mrs. Goss, who had followed Dora to the deck. "Didn't I tell you to keep a close eye on her?"

"She said she wished to speak to you," answered the woman. "I thought she wanted to make terms with you."

Mrs. Goss caught Dora by the wrist and, assisted by Mumps, carried her below.

She struggled and tried to fight them off, and

her cries, reaching Dick, made the youth long to be at her side.

"Let her alone, Baxter!" he cried hotly. "If you harm her you shall pay dearly for it, remember that!"

"Talk is cheap, Dick Rover," came back with a sneer. "Now keep off, or I'll do as I threatened."

"You won't dare to fire on us."

"Won't I? Just come a little closer and you'll see."

By this time the two yachts were not over a hundred feet apart, the *Searchlight* to the starboard of her rival. So far the countless stars had brightened up the bosom of the ocean, but now Martin Harris noted a dark mass of clouds rolling up from the westward.

"We'll have it pretty dark in a few minutes," he cautioned. "If you want to haul up close, better do it at once."

"All right, run them down," ordered Dick, half recklessly. "I don't care how much their boat is damaged, so long as I save the girl. Mumps ran me down, remember."

"I reckon I can sheer 'em all right enough," grinned Harris, who by this time had entered fully into the spirit of the adventure. "But will they shoot?"

"I don't believe they have any firearms," said Tom. "And if they have I don't think Baxter could hit the side of a house at fifty yards."

"Are you going to keep off or not?" yelled Baxter. "I'll give you just ten seconds in which to make up your mind."

"By jinks! he has got a gun!" whispered Sam, as he caught a glint of the polished barrel. "The villain!"

"Baxter, you are playing a foolish game," answered Dick. "What do you intend to do with Dora Stanhope?"

"That's my business. I shan't harm her—if you'll promise to leave me alone."

"Did you run off with her on Crabtree's account?"

"It's none of your business," put in Mumps, who had just returned to the deck, after making sure that Dora should not get away from Mrs. Goss again for the time being.

"It is my business."

"You're awfully sweet on her, aint you?"

"Do you know it's a State's prison offense to abduct anybody?"

"I haven't abducted anybody. She came of her own free will—at first. It's not my fault if she's sick of her bargain now."

"I don't believe a word you say."

"Do as you please. But are you going to keep off or not?"

"We'll not keep off."

"Then I'll fire on you."

"If you do so, we'll fire in return," said Sam. "Maybe we can scare him too," he added, in a whisper.

"I don't believe you've got any weapon," came from Mumps, in a voice that the toady tried in vain to steady. If there was one thing Mumps was afraid of it was a gun or a pistol.

"Try us and see," said Tom. Then he raised his voice. "Harris, bring up that brace of pistols you said were in the locker."

"All right," answered the sailor, catching at the ruse at once; and he hurried below, to return with two shining barrels, made of the handles of a dipper and a tin pot. He held one of the tin barrels out at arm's length. "Shall I fire on 'em now?" he demanded at the top of his voice.

"Don't!" shrieked Mumps, and dropped out of sight behind the mainmast of the *Flyaway*.

The toady had scarcely uttered the word when a loud report rang out, and a pistol bullet cut its way through the mainsail of the *Searchlight*. Baxter had fired his gun, but had taken good care to point the weapon over the Rover boys' heads. The bully now ran for the cabin, expecting to re-

ceive a shot in return, but of course it did not come.

By this time the two yachts were almost side by side and running along at a high rate of speed. Harris got out his boathook to catch fast to the *Flyaway,* when a cry from Tom made him pause.

"Help me! Don't leave me behind!"

"Great Cæsar!" gasped Sam. "Tom's overboard!"

"Down with the mainsail!" roared Harris. "How did he fall over the side?"

"He tried to jump to the other boat," said Dick, who had seen the action. "I was just thinking of doing it myself."

With all possible speed the big sheet of the *Searchlight* was lowered, and then they turned as fast as the wind would permit, to the spot where unlucky Tom was bobbing up and down on the swells like a peanut shell.

"Catch the line!" cried Dick, and let fly with a life preserver attached to a fair-sized rope. His aim was a good one, and soon Tom was being hauled aboard again with all possible speed.

"Oh, what a mess I made of it!" he panted, when he could catch his breath. "I'm not fit to hunt jack rabbits."

"It's lucky you weren't run down by the yacht and killed," said Dick. "I was going to jump,

but when I saw you go down I thought better of it."

Ten minutes of precious time had been lost, and now the *Flyaway* was once more far in the distance. She was heading for shore, and soon the oncoming darkness hid her from view.

"Now what's to be done?" questioned Sam. "She'll slip us sure."

"She can't go very far," answered Harris. "The water-line around here is rather dangerous in the dark."

"Is that a storm coming up?" asked Dick.

"I wouldn't be surprised."

With care they continued on their way, taking the course they surmised their enemies had pursued.

"There is some kind of land!" cried Sam, who was on the watch. "What place is that, Harris?"

"Becker's Cove—so they call it," answered the old tar. "It's not far from Staten Island."

"Do you think they came in here?"

"Perhaps. If they did I reckon they calculate to stay over night."

"Why?"

"Because they'll want a pilot otherwise. It's rather dangerous sailing about here—especially in the dark."

Five minutes later found them close to shore, and the sails were lowered and the anchor cast out.

"I'm going to land," said Dick, and, after a consultation, it was decided that he should take Sam with him, leaving Tom and Martin Harris to keep watch from the yacht. If either party discovered anything, a double whistle twice repeated was to notify the others.

Now that Dan Baxter had actually opened fire on them, Dick wished he had a firearm of some sort. But none was at hand, nor did he know where to obtain such a thing in that vicinity, and the best he and Sam could do was to cut themselves clubs out of some brush growing not far from the shore line.

The spot at which they had landed was by no means an inviting one. It looked like a bit of dumping and meadow ground, and not far away rested the remains of half a dozen partly decayed canal boats which the tide had washed up high in the bogs years before.

"If they landed around here I'd like to know where they went to," grumbled Sam, after he and his big brother had trudged around for half an hour without gaining any clew worth following. "It begins to look as if we had missed it, doesn't it?"

"Never give up, Sam. We have got to find them, you know."

"Yes, if we don't break our necks before that time comes, Dick," and as Sam spoke he went down into a meadow hole up to his knees. Dick helped him out, and as he did so the sounds of two voices broke upon their ears.

"You needn't come if you don't want to, Mumps," came out of the darkness, in Dan Baxter's voice. "I only thought you would be glad of the chance."

"There they are," whispered Dick. "Lie down, and we'll see where they are bound, and if Dora is with them."

He threw himself to earth, and Sam followed. In another moment Baxter and his toady came into plain view, although still some distance away.

"I'll come," came from Mumps. "But I didn't expect to meet your father here."

"I did. He's been here for several days That's the reason why I had Goss bring the *Fly-away* over. I'm going to kill two birds with one stone."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm going to carry Dora Stanhope off, just as old Crabtree wanted, and I'm going to give my father a lift."

"You mean that you are going to help him to escape from the authorities?"

"I didn't put it that way. He wants to keep out of sight."

"It amounts to the same thing, Dan."

"As you will. Will you come, or do you want to go back to the yacht?"

"I—er—I guess I'll come," faltered the toady. "But we must be careful."

"To be sure. I reckon I have as much at stake as you."

The two passed out of hearing, and Dick touched his brother on the arm.

"Did you hear that, Sam?" he asked excitedly.

"I did. What can it mean?"

"Mean? It means that Dan Baxter's father is in the neighborhood and Dan is going to call on his parent."

"I know that, but——"

"You are surprised that father and son are equally bad? I'm not; I thought it all along."

"What will you do?"

"Follow them."

"Will you whistle for Tom and Martin Harris?"

"No; that might arouse suspicion. Let us follow them alone. When they return to their yacht we can tell the others," concluded Dick.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BAXTERS MAKE A NEW MOVE.

As silently as possible Dick and Sam came after Baxter and his toady John Fenwick.

The pair of evildoers left the stretch of meadow as fast as they could, and hurried up a narrow path leading to a half-tumbled-down brick factory.

At the corner of the dilapidated building they paused, and Dan Baxter emitted a long, low whistle.

A silence of several seconds followed, and then a man appeared out of the darkness.

"Who's dat?" came the question.

"It's me, Girk—Dan Baxter," replied the former bully of Putnam Hall, with small regard for the grammar that had been taught to him.

"Who's dat with you?"

"Mumps. He's all right."

"I don't know about dat. Yer father t'ought yer would come alone," growled the tramp thief.

"I've got a new movement on, Buddy. Take us to my father without delay."

"Is dat fellow to be trusted?"

"Yes, you can trust me," replied Mumps with considerable nervousness. His steps in the direction of wrong were beginning to frighten him. At the start he had thought of nothing but to aid Josiah Crabtree in his suit with Mrs. Stanhope, and had calculated that after the marriage the running off with Dora would be overlooked. But here he was taking the girl miles from her home and associated with two men who had robbed a firm of bankers of many thousands of dollars. The outlook, consequently, worried him very much.

"All right, den," muttered Buddy Girk. "Follow me."

He disappeared within the ruined factory, and Baxter and Mumps went after him. Listening intently at a broken-out window, Dick and Sam heard them ascend to an upper floor.

"I guess we have tracked Arnold Baxter," whispered Dick. "I wonder if he and Girk have that stolen money and the securities here?"

"More than likely, Dick. Thieves don't generally leave their booty far out of their sight, so I've been told."

"I would like to make sure. I wonder if we can't go inside and hear some more of their talk?"

"We would be running a big risk. If Arnold Baxter caught us he would—would—well, he wouldn't be very friendly, that's all," and Sam gave a shiver.

"I'm going in. You can remain outside, on watch. If you want me, whistle as we agreed."

"But be careful, Dick!" pleaded the younger brother.

"I will be."

"And don't stay too long," added Sam, who did not relish being left alone in such a forlorn-looking spot, and in the intense darkness which had now settled down over them.

"I won't be any longer than necessary, you can depend on that," replied the big brother.

As silently as a cat after a mouse Dick entered the gloomy building and felt his way over the half-rotted floor to where the stairs were located.

Ascending these, he found himself in something of a hallway, the upper floor of the building being divided into several apartments by wooden partitions nine or ten feet in height.

From one of the apartments shone a faint light. To this he made his way, and, looking through a good-sized knot-hole in the partition, he saw Arnold Baxter, Girk, and the two newcomers seated on several boxes and boards. On

one box stood a candle thrust in the neck of a bottle, some liquor and glasses, and a pasteboard box containing a cold lunch.

"So you're glad I've come, eh?" Dan Baxter was saying to his father.

"Yes, I am glad," was the slow reply. "I—that is—I want to get away from here as soon as possible."

"Why don't you go?"

"I'm afraid to go up into the town. I would prefer to go away by boat."

"To where?"

"To Searock, on the Jersey coast."

"Do you want us to take you there?"

"If you can do it, Dan. I'll give Mumps and your sailor friend a nice little sum for your trouble."

"And don't I get anything?" cried the son sharply.

"To be sure, Dan."

"How much?"

"I'll give you a hundred dollars."

"Pooh! what's that? I want more."

"We'll arrange that later."

"You and Girk are making a fortune out of this—this deal."

"Not as much as you think."

"I've read the newspapers and I know how

much was in the haul. I want a thousand dollars."

"We'll arrange that afterward, Dan. Remember, in the future what is mine is yours."

"Now you're talking, dad," was the bully's quick reply. "I like the way you are doing things, and I'm going to stick to you as soon as this little matter Mumps and I have on hand is settled."

"All right, you shall stay with me," responded the elder Baxter. "Where is your boat?"

"Not over half a mile from here."

"All ready to sail?"

"Yes."

"Then let us make off at once."

"Dat's it," put in Buddy Girk. "I'm afraid the police will let down on us any minit."

"The trouble is, that other boat I mentioned is after us."

"How many are on board?"

"The three Rover boys and an old sailor."

"Four, and we'll be five, not counting the woman you mentioned. I don't think I am afraid of the Rovers," returned Arnold Baxter. "Besides, can't we get away from them in the dark without their knowing what is up?"

"Perhaps we can," said the son slowly. "The trouble is—— What's that?"

Dan Baxter stopped short, as a cracking sound broke upon their ears.

Dick had stepped on a rotten board, and it went down. His foot was caught and held at the ankle, and before he could extricate himself Arnold Baxter and Buddy Girk had him in their grasp.

"Dick Rover again!" ejaculated Arnold Baxter. "Where did you come from?"

"Your son can tell you that," answered Dick. "Let go of me!"

"To be sure I will!" returned the elder Baxter sarcastically. "Are you alone?"

"You can look for yourself."

"I don't see nobuddy here," announced Girk, as he held up the candle. "Maybe somebody is downstairs."

"I'll go down and see," put in Dan Baxter.

Fearful that Sam might be caught, Dick did his best to break away.

"Sam! Sam! look out for yourself!" he yelled. "Don't let them catch you! Call Tom and Harris, and the police, quick!"

"Hang the luck!" muttered Arnold Baxter. "We must cut for it, and be lively about it, too."

"Take de swag," said Girk, referring to a tin box hidden under the flooring of the factory. In

this was hidden the money and securities stolen from Rush & Wilder.

He ran off to get the box. In the meantime Arnold Baxter stood undecided as to what to do. Then he raised his fist and struck Dick an unexpected blow on the temple.

"Take that, you imp!" he cried, and the youth went down at full length more than half stunned.

In the meantime Sam heard the rapid footsteps and the cry of alarm, and his heart leaped into his throat. Then, as Dan Baxter and Mumps came toward him, he retreated in the direction of the *Searchlight,* giving the danger signal as he ran.

"I've got de box!" shouted Buddy Girk to Arnold Baxter. "Wot's de next move?"

"Follow me," said Dan Baxter. "And lose no time. That other boy will soon have the whole neighborhood aroused."

Away went the crowd out of the factory, the bully leading. Once down in the meadow, Dan Baxter hurried them off in the direction of a tiny cove, where the *Flyaway* lay at anchor, with Bill Goss on watch at the stern and Mrs. Goss in the cabin with Dora.

As quickly as they could do so, one after another tumbled on board of the yacht. They heard cries in the distance, as Tom and Martin Harris leaped ashore to join Sam.

DICK HELD THE LIGHT OVER HIS HEAD SO THAT BOTH MIGHT SEE.—*Page 196.*

"Up with the mainsail!" roared Dan Baxter, and Goss obeyed the order with alacrity. At the same time Dan Baxter and Mumps pulled up the anchor; and in less than two minutes the *Flyaway* was standing out into the bay.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DOWN THE STATEN ISLAND SHORE TO SANDY HOOK.

"DICK! Dick! What ails you?"

"My head, Sam! Arnold Baxter struck me down," came with a groan.

"Can you get up? We want to follow them," cried Tom, as he caught his brother by the arm. He had just reached the factory on a dead run, lantern in hand, to find Dick.

"I guess I can stand, Tom. But I can't run —yet."

"Here, take the lantern and I'll carry you," came quickly, and in a moment more Tom Rover had Dick on his back and was running for the *Searchlight* as rapidly as the nature of the meadow land permitted, Dick holding the light over his head so that both might see.

The alarm had now become general, and by the time the yacht was gained two police officers, who had been on the hunt for harbor thieves, appeared.

"What's the row about?" demanded one of the officers of the law, as he came into view.

"Is that an officer?" questioned Dick feebly.

"I am an officer—yes."

"We are after some thieves and some parties who have abducted a girl. Will you help us?"

"Certainly, if what you say is true. Where is the crowd?"

"They ran off in that direction," came from Sam, as he loomed up out of the darkness. "They have a yacht out there somewhere."

"Then we can't catch them—unless we get a boat," answered Sergeant Brown.

"We have a boat, out this way," and Sam pointed with his hand. "But I guess we had better make certain that they go out first."

"True for you, young man. Lead the way and we'll be with you."

All ran on again, Tom bringing up in the rear with Dick. Soon the cove previously mentioned was gained. They were just in time to see the *Flyaway* disappearing in the darkness.

"Come back here!" cried Tom. "If you don't it will be the worse for you!"

"Don't you attempt to follow us!" came savagely from Arnold Baxter. "If you do, somebody will get shot!"

"By crickety, he's a bad one!" cried the second police officer.

"Stop! I order you to stop, in the name of the law!" shouted Sergeant Brown.

"It's the police!" howled Mumps in sudden terror. "Oh, dear! I knew we should catch it!"

"Shut up!" muttered Dan Baxter. "Run up the jib, Goss, and be quick about it!"

"You do it—I'll have to steer here," answered the sailor, and Dan Baxter leaped for the sheet mentioned.

"Are you going to stop?" cried Sergeant Brown, after a few seconds' pause.

To this there was no answer. The sergeant drew his pistol, but before he could use it, even if he so intended, the yacht was nothing but an uncertain shadow in the gloom of the night.

"We had better get to your boat," said the police officer.

"All right; come on," said Sam, and showed the way, which was decidedly uncertain. At one point there was a wide ditch to cross, and Tom had his hands full getting Dick over.

Martin Harris was watching for them, and had all ready to cast off should this be required.

"I'm mighty glad you found the police," he said to Dick, who now felt able to do for himself once more. "Will they go with us?"

"You are certain those folks on the other boat are thieves?" demanded Sergeant Brown. "Carter and I don't want to go off on any wild-goose chase."

"They are not only thieves, but abductors," said Dick. "We can easily prove it. They must be caught if it is possible to do so."

"All right then, we'll go with you. Come, Carter," and the two officers hopped on board. Soon the mainsail was set, followed by all the other available canvas, and the *Searchlight* was continuing the chase which had been so curiously broken off.

Martin Harris was in the dark so far as knowing what course the *Flyaway* had taken, and had to trust to luck to fall in with the fleeing craft.

"If she's going outside of Staten Island, I reckon I can spot her before long," he said.

"It looks to me as if the clouds were blowing away," said Tom. "If they do, the starlight will help us a good deal."

As the yacht tore along through the water, the two police officers listened with close attention to what the boys had to tell them.

"If they are the men who robbed Rush & Wilder it will make a fine haul to capture them," said Sergeant Brown.

"We want to save Dora Stanhope as much as

we want to catch those thieves," returned Dick. "I wonder if her disappearance has been reported to the police?"

"I can't say. You see, Carter and I have been out all day looking for a pair of harbor thieves who stole some clothing from a pleasure yacht lying off the Staten Island shore."

"Did you see anything of your men?"

"We saw them; but they got away in a row-boat. Where they have gone to is hard telling. But I don't imagine the theft amounted to much —at least, it was nothing in comparison to the crimes you are trying to run down."

On and on went the *Searchlight* through the night, and slowly but surely the clouds in the heavens cleared away, letting the stars shine down once more on the silent waters.

Suddenly Martin Harris gave a murmur of satisfaction. "There she is."

"The *Flyaway!*" came from several of the others.

"Yes. Just as I thought; she is heading down the Staten Island shore straight for Sandy Hook."

"They are bound for Searock!" cried Dick suddenly. "Mr. Baxter mentioned the place just before they discovered that I was spying on them."

"That's a good way down the New Jersey coast," said Sergeant Brown. "Can this boat stand such a sail?"

"Can she?" snorted Harris. "She's strong enough to go to Europe in, if you want to make the trip."

"Thank you; when I go to Europe I'll go in a steamer," laughed the police officer. "I don't think you'd do much in a heavy blow."

"The *Searchlight* would hold her own," answered the old sailor confidently.

The breeze was increasing, and they rounded the Narrows at a lively rate. The swell from the ocean now struck them, and the yacht occasionally dipped her nose a little deeper into it than was expected.

"Here, I don't want to get wet!" cried Carter. "I'm no sailor, you know."

"You won't get much," laughed Harris. "This roll is just enough to be pleasant."

"Perhaps—to some people," came from the policeman, who had never cared for the rolling deep and who was beginning to feel a trifle seasick. Fortunately for him, however, the sickness proved mild and of short duration.

The *Flyaway* was now in plain sight, but too far off to be spoken. She had every sail set to its fullest, and for the time being it seemed im-

possible for the *Searchlight* to gain upon her. Thus mile after mile was covered, until Sandy Hook lighthouse could be plainly seen but a short distance away.

"We are out in the ocean now," remarked Dick an hour later. "Gracious, when I left Cedarville I didn't think that this was going to develop into such a long chase!"

"Never mind how far we go, if only the chase proves a success," answered Tom. "If we succeed in not only rescuing Dora, but also in bringing those thieves to justice, it will be a big feather in our caps."

"I'm glad the police are along," came from Sam. "They must be well armed, and I don't see how Arnold Baxter and the others will dare resist them."

"They will dare a good deal to keep out of prison, Sam," remarked Dick. "They know well enough that if they are caught it may mean a long term for each of them."

On and on went the two yachts until Sandy Hook lighthouse was left in the distance. Once it began to cloud over as if there was a storm in sight, but soon the rising sun came out brightly over the rim of the ocean.

When it came mealtime Sam prepared the repast, and all, even the officers of the law, en-

joyed what was served to them. "It gives one an appetite, this salt air," was Sergeant Brown's comment.

Soon they were standing down the New Jersey coast, but so far out on the ocean that the shore line was little more than a dark streak on the horizon.

"Are we gaining?" That was the question each asked, not once but a score of times. Martin Harris felt sure that they were; but if this was so, the advantage on the side of the *Searchlight* was but a slight one.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SEARCHLIGHT AND LANTERN.

"ONE thing is in our favor," remarked Dick, as the day wore away and the distance between the two yachts seemed undiminished. "Even if we don't succeed in catching them before to-night we know where they are bound."

"Perhaps it might be as well to hang back!" burst in Tom. "If we remain in sight they won't land as intended."

"The thing of it is, they may change their plans, especially if they think your brother overheard their talk," put in the police sergeant. "My idea is, they'll keep right on down the coast until the darkness hides them from us. Then they'll try to sneak in some cove or river and abandon the boat."

"They'll have a job taking Dora Stanhope along," was Sam's remark. "I don't believe she'll go another step willingly."

"As if she has gone willingly!" said Dick.

"Well, I mean she'll be more on her guard than

she was, and they'll have more of a job to make her go along."

Night settled down gradually and found every heart full of serious speculation. Dick was especially affected, for he had hoped to see Dora rescued hours before.

"Goodness only knows where they will take her by morning!" he groaned. "I'd give almost anything to be at her side!"

With the going down of the sun the wind died away and the sails of the *Searchlight* flapped idly to and fro.

"Now it's a waiting game," announced Martin Harris. "If we can't move neither can they."

"Just the same, the *Flyaway* is turning out to sea!" cried Tom. "Now what can that mean?"

"That may be only a blind," said Carter.

"No, they are afraid of drifting on the sands," answered the skipper of the *Searchlight*. "I reckon we'll have to turn out, too," and he changed the course of the yacht.

Darkness found both boats far out on the Atlantic and almost out of sight of each other.

"This is maddening!" cried Dick. "Can't we row, or do something?"

"Rowing wouldn't count much, I'm afraid," laughed Martin Harris. "But don't fret. Un-

less I am mistaken, we'll have a breeze before midnight."

"And they may be out of sight long before that time!"

"That's to be seen, lad. I'll watch the thing closely, for I'm as anxious to catch 'em as you are."

"I'd give a good deal for a small boat."

"So would I."

"I thought all yachts carried them."

"They do generally, but mine was stove in at a Catskill dock about a week ago and is being repaired."

"Here comes the wind!" shouted Sam, half an hour later, and when the *Flyaway* was almost out of sight. "Now, Harris, let us make the most of it."

"We will, and I hope there isn't too much of it," was the quick reply.

Soon the breeze struck them, and, as it came from shore, it hit the *Searchlight* first and drove her fairly close to the other yacht. But before anything could be said or done, the other craft also moved; and then the chase began as before.

"We're getting all we want now," announced Tom, as the wind grew heavier. "Just look how the yacht dips her nose into the brine!"

"We'll have to shorten sail before long," said

Martin Harris. "If we don't, a sudden gust might make us lose our stick."

"I'd like to see the *Flyaway* lose her mast!" cried Tom. "It would just serve the Baxters right if they went to the bottom."

"No, we don't want to see that yacht harmed," put in Dick quickly. "Remember, Dora is on board—and that stolen fortune, too."

Swiftly both yachts flew on their outward course, the ocean growing more tempestuous each minute. The police officers viewed the turn of affairs with alarm.

"If it's not safe, let us turn back," whispered Carter.

"Don't get scared so soon," replied Harris, who overheard the remark. "I've been in a worse blow than this, twice over."

The sails were reefed, and they continued on their course. The *Flyaway* was now but a shadow in the gloom, and presently even this died out.

"The chase is over," announced Harris in disgust. "Hang the luck, anyhow!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Dick.

"She's out of sight, and there is no telling now how she will turn."

"But she can't tack back in this wind."

"She can make a putty good try at it, lad."

"Well, what do you propose to do?"

"I hardly know."

"Look here, why do you call this yacht the *Searchlight?*" put in Sam. "Have you a searchlight on board?"

"Not much of a one, lad. There is a little electric battery and light in the cabin, one that was used by a professor that I took out two years ago, when the yacht was built. He was interested in electricity and he made the light himself. I never used it, for I didn't understand how it worked."

"Let us look at the light; perhaps we can do something with it," said Dick.

"That's the talk," came from Tom. "Anything is better than holding your hands and doing nothing."

Martin Harris was willing, and led the way into the cabin. Battery and light were stored away in a couple of soap boxes, and the boys brought them out and set them on the cabin table.

"I think I can fix these up," said Dick, after a long examination. "The batteries are not in very good shape, but I think they will do. They are meant to work on the same plan as these new electric lights for bicycles, only they are, I reckon, more powerful."

"Well, do what you please with the machine,"

said Martin Harris. "In the meantime, I'll see what I can do with a lantern and a tin reflector. Sometimes you can see a white sail putty good with a tin reflector."

He hurried to the deck again, and Sam, who was not much interested in electricity, followed him. One of the best of the yacht's lanterns was polished up to the last degree, and they also polished the metal reflector until it shone like a newly coined silver piece.

"That's a good light!" cried Sam, when it was lit up. "Where will you place it?"

"Up at the top of the mast," answered the old sailor. "I'll show you."

It took some time to adjust the lantern just right, but this accomplished they found that they could see for a distance of a hundred yards or more.

"I see the sail!" announced Harris. "Don't you—just over our port bow?"

"I see it," answered Sergeant Brown. "Not very far off either."

Without delay the course of the *Searchlight* was changed so that she was headed directly for the *Flyaway*.

"Keep off!" was the cry out of the darkness. "Keep off, or it will be the worse for you!"

"You may as well give up," shouted back the

police sergeant. "You are bound to be caught sooner or later."

"We don't think so. If it comes to the worst, remember, we can do a heap of fighting."

"We can fight too," was the grim response.

"Dora! Dora! are you safe?" shouted Sam, with all the strength of his youthful lungs.

"Save me!" came back the cry. "Don't let them carry me further away."

"We'll do our best, don't fear."

Dora wanted to say more, but was prevented from doing so by Mumps, who again hurried her below.

"You must lock her up," he said to Mrs. Goss, and once more the unhappy girl found herself a prisoner in the cabin.

She had hoped for much during the chase along shore, but now her heart sank like a lump of lead and she burst into tears.

"No use of crying," said Mrs. Goss. "It won't help you a bit."

"I want to be free!" sobbed Dora. "Where will they take me?"

"Never mind; you just be quiet and wait."

"But you are running directly out into the ocean!"

"What of that?"

"I don't wish to go."

"You'll have to take what comes, as I told you before."

"Mrs. Goss, have you no pity for me?"

"If I did have it wouldn't do you any good, Miss Dora. I've got to do as the men folks want me to do. If I don't they'll make——"

The woman did not finish what she was saying. A loud report rang out on deck, followed by the distant crash of glass. Then came a yell, followed by another report and more crashing of glassware.

"What can that mean?" burst out Dora, but instead of answering her, Mrs. Goss bounced out of the cabin, locking the door after her, and hurried to the deck.

CHAPTER XXV.

A SHOT FROM THE DARKNESS.

THE shots which had reached Dora's ears had come from a gun in the hands of Arnold Baxter.

The man had been enraged at the sight of the lantern on the mast of the *Searchlight,* and, taking careful aim, had sent a charge of shot into the affair, smashing globe, reflector, and tin cup, and scattering the oil in all directions.

"Hurrah, I struck it!" shouted Arnold Baxter gleefully. "Now they won't see us quite so plainly."

"Knock out the other lantern, pop," put in Dan Baxter, and the parent turned in the second barrel of the shotgun with equal success.

For an instant the deck of the *Searchlight* seemed to be in darkness. Sam felt a bit of hot glass strike him on the cheek and raised his hand to brush it off. Then he felt something warm on the back of his leg. Looking down he saw to his horror that some of the oil from the lantern had fallen on him and that it was ablaze!

"Help! help!" he shrieked. "I'm burning up!"

His cry alarmed everybody, and all, even Dick and Tom, came rushing to his aid. But Sergeant Brown was first, and he promptly threw the boy down flat and, whipping off his coat, began to beat out the flames.

Another shot now rang out, aimed at a third lantern, but the light was not struck. By this time Martin Harris made the discovery that the mainsail was on fire in two places, while the jib was also suffering.

"This is getting hot!" he cried, when Carter opened up fire at random, determined to do what he could. A yell and a groan followed, and then all became quiet, and firing on both sides was over.

Fortunately for Sam, the flames upon his person were quickly extinguished, and all the lad really suffered was the ruin of his trousers and an ugly blister on the calf of his leg. But he was badly scared, and when it was over he had almost to be carried to the cabin.

In the meantime Martin Harris procured several pails of water and a long-handled swab and with these did what he could to extinguish the fire on the sails. Several of the others joined in, and inside of ten minutes all danger of a conflagration was past.

"That's the worst yet!" growled the old sailor,

as he surveyed the mainsail, which had two holes in it each as large as a barrel. "I'd like to wring the neck of the fellow as did it, yes I would," and he shook his head determinedly.

"That's the end of that light," said Sergeant Brown. "What are you going to do next?"

"I think I can get that searchlight to work," put in Dick. "But will it be of any use? They may start to shooting again."

"We've got to have some kind of a light, even if it's only a tallow candle," grumbled Harris. "If we haven't got a light some coastwise steamer may run us down."

He set to work to rig up a temporary light, and in the meantime Dick returned to the cabin to experiment with the electric light. He found Sam on the couch, bathing his leg with oil to take away the sting of the burn.

"How is it, Sam—hurt much?"

"I suppose it might be worse," was the younger brother's reply. "I wonder who fired that shot?"

"One of the Baxters, more than likely. They are a cold-blooded pair."

"One or more of us might have been killed—if we had been directly behind the lights."

"That is true. I don't suppose Arnold Baxter would care much if we were. He was father's

enemy, you must remember, and he said he hated all of us."

Sam resumed his bathing and Dick turned to the cabin table, upon which the battery and other portions of the searchlight rested.

Dick had always been greatly interested in electricity and therefore the parts of the battery before him were not hard for him to understand.

But there was one trouble with the battery which did not reach his eye as he turned it around and started it up. That was that a portion of the insulation of a main wire was worn off.

As he turned on the current there was a flash and the light blazed up almost as bright as day.

"That's fine!" cried Sam. "We'll be able to see the *Flyaway* a long distance off now."

"Well, I only hope when we put this up it won't be knocked out like the other lights were."

"Of course we'll have to run that risk."

In a minute more Dick started to carry the searchlight to the deck.

He had turned off the light proper, consequently the way to the companionway was rather dark.

He had almost reached the top of the steps when Sam heard a scream, saw a flash of fire, and then Dick came tumbling to the cabin floor in a heap, with the battery and light beside him.

"My gracious, he's been shocked!" burst out the youngest Rover; and, forgetting all about his burn, ran to his brother's assistance.

"What's that noise?" came from the deck.

"Dick's been shocked by the searchlight!" cried Sam. "Come down here, somebody, and let us see what we can do for him."

"Shocked, is it!" cried Sergeant Brown. "If that's the case, look out that somebody else don't catch it."

Tom came tumbling down, followed by both police officers, and Dick was picked up and deposited on the couch. Then Sam kicked the searchlight and batteries into a corner.

"They can stay there for all I care," said he. "They are too dangerous, unless a chap knows just how to handle them."

Dick lay with his eyes wide open, but unable to move. Tom bent down and announced that his heart was still beating.

But little in the way of restoratives were at hand, and the most they could do was to rub the youth's body in an attempt to restore the circulation.

"Oh, I hope he isn't permanently injured!" cried Tom. "If he should turn out a cripple it would be awful!"

"That's so," answered Sam. "Poor Dick!

He's as bad off as if those rascals had shot him!"

Slowly Dick came to his senses. But he was very weak, and soon he discovered that he was powerless to move his left arm.

"It's all numb," he announced. "It feels as if it was dead."

"Let me shake it for you," said Tom, and both brothers went to work, but with small success. The arm hung down as limp as a rag, and the left leg was nearly as badly off, although Dick said he could feel a slight sensation in it, like so many needles sticking him.

"You see, I've been afraid of that battery right along," said Martin Harris. "The professor got shocked once, and he limped around for a long while after."

"But he got over it at last, didn't he?" questioned Tom eagerly.

"I can't say about that. He went off, and I haven't seen him since," was the unsatisfactory reply.

The injuries to Dick and to Sam had somewhat dampened Tom's ardor, and he wondered what they had best do next, and spoke to the police officers about it.

"I don't know of anything but to turn back to shore," said Sergeant Brown. "We've lost them

in the dark, and that is all there is to it. If we go ashore we can send out an alarm, and as soon as the *Flyaway* is spotted, somebody will go out and arrest everybody on board—I mean everybody but the young lady, of course."

"But they may come ashore in the dark."

"And they may do that even if we stay out here—and then they'll have more of an advantage than ever. No, I think the best thing we can do is to turn back to the coast and make the safest landing we can find."

When Dick heard of this, however, he shook his head. "Don't go back yet," he pleaded. "See if you can't make out the *Flyaway* somewhere. She won't dare to sail very far without a light."

"I don't go for giving up just yet," put in Martin Harris. "As the lad says, she'll show a light very soon now—for there is a coastwise steamer a-coming," and he pointed in the direction of Sandy Hook.

He was right, and soon the many lights from the big steam vessel could be plainly seen. She was heading almost directly for them, but presently steered to the eastward.

"She must be almost in the track of the *Flyaway*," went on Martin Harris. "Just wait and see if I aint right."

All waited and watched eagerly, and thus five minutes passed. Then from a distance they saw a light flash up.

"There she is!" cried Tom. "Let us head for her at once. They won't keep that light out long—just long enough to let that steamer go by."

Martin Harris was already at the tiller, and soon the *Searchlight* was thrown over and was again dipping her nose in the long ocean swells. The wind had died away only to freshen more than ever, and the chase now became a lively one.

The enemy seemed to know that the exposure of their light had given those on the *Searchlight* the cue, and they were sailing as rapidly as all of their canvas permitted. But Harris was now handling his craft better than ever before, and slowly but surely the distance between the two craft was diminished, until the *Flyaway* could be made out faintly even without a light.

"Don't lose her again," said Dick. "We must keep at it until we run them down completely." And Harris promised to do his best.

It was now past midnight, and the police officers said they were tired out and dropped into the cabin to take a nap. Dick likewise remained below, trying to get up some circulation in the lamed arm.

"Can't you feel anything?" queried Tom.

"I think I can," answered his big brother. "Yes, yes, it's coming now!" he went on. "Thank God!" and he suddenly raised the arm and bent the fingers of his hand. By daylight that member of his body was nearly as well as ever. But this experience was one which Dick has not forgotten to the present day.

Sam had bound up his burn with a rag saturated with oil and flour, and announced that he felt quite comfortable. "But just let me get hold of those Baxters," he added. "I shan't stand on any ceremony with them."

"I don't believe any of us will," said Tom. "But as anxious as I am to have this over, I would just as lief have the chase last until morning. Then we'll be better able to see what we are doing."

"Or trying to do," said Sam with a faint smile.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FLAG OF TRUCE.

SUNRISE found the two yachts far out on the ocean with land nowhere in sight. The breeze was still stiff, but it was not as heavy as it had been, and Martin Harris was unable to decrease the space which separated his own craft from that of the enemy.

"You see, the *Searchlight* is the better boat in a strong blow," he explained. "When the wind is light the *Flyaway* has as good a chance of making headway as we have."

"Well, one thing is certain," said Tom. "This chase can't last forever."

"It may last longer than you imagine, lad."

"Hardly. We haven't more than enough provisions aboard to last over to-day."

"Perhaps the other boat is even worse off," said Sergeant Brown hopefully. "If that's the case we'll starve them out."

"I don't care what we do, so long as we rescue Dora and get that stolen fortune," said Dick, as

he dragged himself to the crowd, followed by Sam.

"And how's Sam?" questioned Tom, turning to his younger brother.

"Oh, I'm all right—if it comes to fighting."

"And you, Dick?"

"I think I can do something—at least, I am willing to try."

Breakfast—a rather scant meal—had just been disposed of, when Martin Harris uttered a shout.

"They want to do some talking," he announced.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Dick.

"They are hoisting a white rag."

"Sure enough!" ejaculated Tom, as he pointed to a flag of truce which Dan Baxter was holding aloft, fastened to an oar. "What do you make of that?"

"They want to make terms," laughed Sergeant Brown. "I reckon things are coming our way at last."

"Do we want to talk to them?" asked Tom.

"Let us make them surrender, and do the talking afterward," came from Sam.

"It won't hurt to let them talk," said the police sergeant. "We can do as we please, anyway, after they are done."

The matter was discussed for a moment, and

then Tom tied his handkerchief to a stick and held it up.

"Ahoy there!" came from Arnold Baxter. "Will you honor the flag of truce?"

"Yes," yelled Sergeant Brown.

"And let us have our distance after our talk is over, if we can't come to terms?"

"Yes."

"All right, then; we'll come close enough to talk to you."

Slowly and cautiously the *Flyaway* drew nearer, until all on board of Harris' yacht could see their enemies quite plainly.

Arnold Baxter was armed with a shotgun, while Buddy Girk and Dan Baxter carried pistols. Mumps kept out of sight as much as possible, while Bill Goss attended to the steering of the boat. Dora and Mrs. Goss were below.

"Well, what have you got to say?" demanded Dick, as soon as the others were within easy talking distance.

"How many on board of that yacht?" demanded Arnold Baxter, as he looked at the police officers glumly.

"Enough," replied Dick. "Is that all you've got to say?"

"Don't grow impudent, boy. It won't set well."

"A person couldn't be impudent to such a rascal as you, Arnold Baxter."

"Have a care, Dick Rover. What do you propose to do?"

"Land all of you in jail, rescue Dora Stanhope, and recover that money you stole."

"Indeed!"

"Yes—indeed! Don't you think we are pretty close to doing it?"

"No, you are a long way off. You won't dare to break this truce while the flags fly. If you do, I'll shoot you just as sure as you are born."

"I don't intend to dishonor any truce, Arnold Baxter. But, nevertheless, you and your crowd are almost at the end of your rope, and you know it."

"Feeling hungry, aint you?" put in Martin Harris.

"You shut up!" roared Dan Baxter, for Harris had hit the nail exactly on the head. "We'll settle this with the Rovers and the police, not with you."

"You'll settle with me for burning my sails and breaking my lanterns," retorted the skipper of the *Searchlight* wrathfully.

"Let us come to terms," went on Arnold Baxter in a milder tone. "I reckon what you want principally is to rescue Dora Stanhope?"

"Yes, I want that," said Dick quickly.

"If we hand her over to you, will you promise not to follow us any longer?"

"Well—er—what of that money——" began Dick, glancing at those around him.

"We can't let you go," interposed Sergeant Brown. "You are wanted for that robbery in Albany."

"We deny the robbery," said Arnold Baxter.

"All right—you'll have a chance to clear yourself in court."

"We are not going to court, not by a jugful," put in Buddy Girk. "If we give up the gal that's got to end it. Otherwise, we don't give her up, see?"

"But you'll have to give her up later on," put in Tom. "And the longer you keep her the more you will have to suffer for it, when it comes to a settlement."

"Let's give her up," whispered Mumps to Dan Baxter. To the credit of the toady let it be said that he was heartily sick of the affair and wished he had never entered into it.

"You keep your mouth shut!" answered the former bully of Putnam Hall. "My dad knows how to work this racket."

"Somebody said something about being hungry," continued Arnold Baxter significantly. "I

imagine Miss Stanhope is as hungry as any of us, if not more so."

"Do you mean to say you are starving her!" cried Dick indignantly.

"I mean to say that she will have to starve just as much as we do," was the unsatisfactory answer.

"And you have run out of provisions?"

"We have run out of provisions for her, yes."

"That means that you won't give her any more, even though you may have some for yourselves? You are even bigger brutes than I took you to be," concluded the elder Rover boy bitterly.

"We've got to look out for ourselves," said Dan Baxter. "If we let you have the girl you ought to be satisfied."

"Let us talk to Dora," suggested Tom.

"No, you can't see her unless you agree to our terms," said Arnold Baxter decidedly. "If we bring her up now she may try to get away from us."

"You have got to submit to arrest and stand trial," said Sergeant Brown. "There are no two ways about it. If you won't submit quietly we'll have to fight. But let me tell you, if you fight it will go hard with you."

"That's right; make them give up everything,"

put in Tom. "I'll fight them if it comes to the worst."

"If only they don't harm Dora!" whispered Dick. "Think, they may be starving her already!"

"I don't believe they would dare, Dick."

"Dare? I think the Baxters are cruel enough to do 'most anything."

"Officer, do you know that you are on the high seas and can't touch us?" went on Arnold Baxter, after an awkward pause.

"I know nothing of the kind, and I'll risk what I am doing," retorted Sergeant Brown.

"Can't we compromise this matter?"

"What else have you to propose?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll agree not to molest us further I'll turn the girl over to you and make each of you a present of one hundred dollars," went on Arnold Baxter nervously.

"Want to bribe us, eh?" cried Tom. "Thanks, but we are not in that business."

"I never took a bribe yet, and I've been on the force six years," put in Carter.

"You can't bribe me," said the sergeant, in a tone that admitted of no argument. "You must surrender absolutely or take the consequences."

"All right, then; we'll take the consequences," was the reckless response. "And remember, we

hold that girl, and any harm you do us will only counteract on her head."

"Don't you dare to harm her, you villain!" cried Dick, turning pale. "Whatever you do you shall answer for in court."

"Humph, Dick Rover, don't be so smart," put in Dan Baxter. "This game is still ours, and you know it."

"I know nothing of the kind. We will starve you out and fight you, and you will see what the end will be, Dan Baxter," retorted Dick; and then the two yachts began to drift apart once more.

As the *Flyaway* moved off, Mumps, who had disappeared for a minute, came into sight once more. In his hand he held something white, which he threw with all force at the *Searchlight's* mainsail.

"Take that!" he cried. "Take that, and remember me!"

By this time the two yachts were so far apart that no more could be said.

"What was that you threw on their boat?" demanded Baxter, turning to his toady.

"A seashell," replied Mumps. "I thought I could hit Dick Rover with it."

"Humph, you had better take some lessons in throwing," muttered the bully. "You didn't come within a dozen feet of him."

"Never mind; I showed them I wasn't afraid of them," said Mumps, and turned away. Then he looked back anxiously. "I hope they pick it up and see what's inside," he murmured. "Oh, but aint I tired of this crowd! If ever I get out of this, you can wager I'll turn over a new leaf and cut Dan Baxter dead."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE COLLISION IN THE FOG.

"HULLO! Mumps isn't keeping this flag of truce very good," remarked Sam, as the seashell dropped at his feet.

"There is something inside of the shell," said Tom. "A bit of paper. Perhaps it's a message."

"I'll soon see," returned his younger brother, and ran to where he could not be seen from the other yacht.

He pulled from the seashell a small square of paper, upon which had been hastily scrawled the following in lead pencil:

"I will help you all I can and hope you won't prosecute me. I will see that Dora S. gets something to eat, even if I give her my share. They intend to go to Sand Haven if they can give you the slip.

"JOHN FENWICK."

"Good for Mumps! he's coming to his senses," cried Sam, and showed the others the message. Dick read the words with much satisfaction.

"I hope he does stand by Dora," he said. "If so, I'll shield him all I can when the crowd is brought up for trial."

"If he tells the truth we may as well put into harbor and make for Sand Haven," said Martin Harris, who had now resumed the chase once more.

"Yes; but he may not be telling the truth," was Sergeant Brown's comment. "The whole thing may be a trick to get us to go to Sand Haven while that crowd goes somewhere else."

"I think they are tired of carrying the girl around," said Carter. "To give her up to us would have been no hardship."

"That's it," put in Martin Harris. "Well, I'm willing to do whatever the crowd says."

The matter was talked over at some length, and it was finally decided to cruise around after the *Flyaway* for the best part of the day. If, when night came on, the other craft should steer in the direction of Sand Haven, they would do likewise, and land as soon as darkness came to cover up their movements.

Slowly the day wore along and the two yachts kept at about the same distance. They were both

running due south, and land was out of sight as before.

"This is developing into a regular ocean trip and no mistake," remarked Tom, as he dropped into a seat near the cabin. "Who would have thought it when we left Cedarville in such a hurry?"

"I'd like to know how things are going up there," mused Dick. "It will be too bad if Josiah Crabtree succeeds in marrying Mrs. Stanhope while we are away."

"Let us hope for the best," put in Sam. "Hullo, the *Flyaway* is moving eastward!"

"What does that mean, Harris?" cried Dick.

"It means that they want to make the most of this wind," responded the skipper of the yacht grimly. "I'm learning a trick or two on 'em, and I'll overreach 'em if they aint careful."

"You can't do it any too quick," answered Dick. "When next we meet there won't be quite so much talking. Instead, we'll have some acting, and pretty lively at that."

Sergeant Brown was questioned concerning his weapons, and said he had two pistols and Carter had the same. One of the extra weapons was loaned to Dick and the second went to Tom. It was decided that in case of a close brush Sam and Harris were to arm themselves with anything that

was handy, but otherwise they were to attend to the sailing of the *Searchlight.*

Provisions, to use Tom's way of expressing it, were now "more than low," and as they ate the scant food dealt around, Dick could not help but think of how Dora might be faring.

"I'd willingly starve myself if only it would give her what she needs," he thought. It made him sick at heart to think of how she might be suffering.

Mile after mile was passed, until the sun began to descend over to the westward. The yachts were now close on to quarter of a mile apart.

"Here comes another steamer!" cried Tom presently. "Look here, why can't we get some help from her?"

"Perhaps we can!" burst out Dick. "I never thought of that."

"Let us signal her anyway," suggested Sergeant Brown.

A flag was run up as high as the topmast permitted, and they headed directly for the steamer's course.

As the ship came closer they made her out to be a big "tramp" from the South American trade. For the benefit of those who do not know, let me state that a "tramp" steamer is one going from one port to another regardless of any regular

route, the movements of the craft depending entirely upon the freight to be picked up.

"She sees the signal!" exclaimed Dick, after an anxious wait of several minutes.

Slowly the steamer came up to them, and then her ponderous engines ceased to work.

"What is wanted?" came in Spanish, from a dark-looking man on the forward deck.

"Can't you talk English?" cried Dick.

"A leetle."

"We are after that other sail-boat. The men on her are thieves and have abducted a girl, too. Will you help us catch them?"

At this the man on the steamer drew down his face and held a consultation with several behind him.

"You are sure they are thieves?" he asked presently.

"Yes."

"Have they with them the money that was stolen?"

"We are pretty certain they have."

"And the girl?"

"Yes."

"And what is the reward for the girl, señor?"

"Well, I declare!" burst out Tom. "They are after a reward the first thing."

"There is no reward yet," answered Dick. "But there may be."

At this the South American scowled. "We cannot lose time on a hunt that is worth nothing," he said. "We must get to Brooklyn by to-morrow morning."

"You won't help us bring them to justice?"

"We cannot afford to lose the time."

Without further words the big steamer's engines were started up again and away she sped, leaving the *Searchlight* to sink and rise on the rollers left in her wake.

"My, but that fellow is accommodating!" groaned Dick. "He isn't doing a single thing without pay."

"We might have bought some provisions from him," put in Martin Harris. "I reckon he'd sell some for a round price—being so near to the end of his voyage."

"I don't want his stuff," remarked Sam. "I'm afraid it would choke me if I tried to eat it."

The stop had given the *Flyaway* an advantage, and she was making the most of it. But before the sun went down those on the other yacht saw her head for the coast once more.

"I guess the note told the truth," said Harris.

"Is Sand Haven near here?" questioned Tom.

"It is not over half a mile further down the coast."

"And how far are we out?" was the police sergeant's question.

"Between five and six miles, as near as I can calculate."

"Will they be able to run in by dark?"

"I think so. You see, the wind is shifting, and it depends a good bit on how much it veers around," concluded the old sailor.

Slowly the sun sank in the west. It was growing cloudy and a mist was rising. The mist made Martin Harris shake his head; but, not wishing to alarm the others, he said nothing.

But soon Dick noticed the mist and so did the rest. "Gracious, supposing we get caught in a fog!" muttered Tom.

"I was just thinking of it," returned his elder brother. "There will be no fun in it—if we are out of sight of land."

A quarter of an hour went by, and still no land appeared. It was now so raw that the boys were glad enough to button their coats tightly about them. Then, of a sudden, the fog came rolling over them like a huge cloud, and they were unable to see a dozen yards in any direction.

"This is the worst yet!" groaned Sam. "What's to do now?"

"Yes, what's to do now?" repeated Sergeant Brown. "Can you make the coast, skipper?"

"To be sure I can," replied Harris, as he looked at the compass. "But I don't know about landing. You see we might stick our nose into a sandbank before we knowed it."

"Perhaps the fog will lift?" suggested Carter.

"A fog like this isn't lifting in a hurry," said Dick. "Like as not it won't move until the sun comes up to-morrow morning," and in this guess he was right.

A half-hour went by, and from a distance came the deep note of a fog-horn, sounding apparently from up the shore.

"We ought to have a horn," said Sam. "Some big boat may come along and run us down."

"There is a horn in the cabin pantry," replied Martin Harris. "We might as well bring it out. If we are sunk one or more of us will most likely be drowned."

"Oh, don't say that!" ejaculated Carter. "I'll get the horn;" and, running below, he brought it up, and he and Sam took turns at blowing it with all the strength of their lungs.

"One thing is comforting; those rascals are no better off than we are," was Tom's comment.

"Yes; but if they founder, what will become of

Dora?" said Dick. "I don't believe any one of them would put himself out to save her."

"I guess you are right there, Dick. I never thought of her, poor girl," replied the brother.

Dick and Sergeant Brown were well up in the bow, one watching to starboard and the other to port, for anything which might appear through the gloom. The horn was blowing constantly, and now from a distance came the sounds of both horns and bells.

"We are getting close to some other ships," said Martin Harris. "I reckon we had best take a few reefs in the mainsail and stow away the jib;" and these suggestions were carried out.

The minutes that followed were anxious ones, for all felt that a collision might occur at any moment. The fog was growing thicker each instant, and this, coupled with the coming of night, seemed to shut them in as with a pall.

"A boat is dead ahead!" came suddenly from Dick, and Sergeant Brown also gave a cry of warning. Then came a shock and a crash and a splintering of wood, followed by the cries of men and boys and the screams of a woman and a girl.

"We've struck the *Flyaway!*" called out Tom, and then he found himself in the water, with Sam alongside of him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOME AGAIN—CONCLUSION.

WHEN the collision came, Dick, to save himself from injury, gave a leap up into the air, and Sergeant Brown did the same. The shock sent the *Searchlight* backward, and when the youth came down he found himself sprawling on the *Fly-away's* deck, close beside Dan Baxter.

"Dick Rover!" gasped the former bully of Putnam Hall. "So it is your boat that has run into us?"

"Baxter, where is Dora Stanhope?" panted Dick, as soon as he could speak. He was afraid that one or both yachts were going down and that Dora might be drowned. Even in this extreme moment of peril his one thought was for his girl friend.

"Find out for yourself," burst out Baxter, and aimed a blow at Dick's head with his fist. But the blow never reached its mark, for Mumps hauled the bully backward.

"We've had enough of this—at least, I've had

enough," said Fenwick, astonishing himself at his own boldness. "Dick, Dora is in the cab—no, she's coming up."

"Save me!" came in a scream from the girl. "Oh, Dick, is it really you!" and she ran right into Dick's arms.

By this time it was discovered that the two yachts were locked together, the bowsprit of the *Flyaway* having become entangled in the rigging of the *Searchlight*. Both yachts were badly damaged, but neither sufficiently so as to be in danger of sinking.

"Back with you!" came from Arnold Baxter, and fired his shotgun at the police officers. But the rocking of the boats spoiled his aim. Then Sergeant Brown fired, and the elder Baxter went down, shot through the left leg.

By this time all of the evildoers realized that the final struggle for freedom was at hand, and began to fight desperately, Buddy Girk engaging Dick, Bill Goss facing Carter, and Mrs. Goss beating Martin Harris back with a stewpan from the gallery. In the meantime Tom and Sam swam back to the *Searchlight,* and clambered on board as rapidly as possible.

They were in time to see Carter go down, hit over the head by Bill Goss. But that was the last of the fight, so far as the skipper of the *Fly-*

away was concerned, for two blows, delivered by Tom and Sam simultaneously, stretched him senseless on the deck.

"You had better give up!" cried Tom to Dan Baxter, who was doing what he could to get the two yachts apart. "This is our battle."

"Not much!" muttered the bully. "Stand back, or it will be the worse for you!"

He sprang at Tom and shoved a pistol under the boy's very nose. But before the weapon could be discharged, Dick, leaving Dora, kicked the pistol from the bully's hand.

"You villain, take that!" cried Dick, and grappled with Baxter. Both rolled over on the deck, and, shoved by somebody from behind, Sam rolled on top of the pair. A second later all three rolled down the cabin stairs in a heap.

"Oh, my back!" It was Baxter who uttered the cry, and not without cause, for his backbone had received a hard crack on the bottom step of the stairs.

"You lie still!" commanded Dick, as he leaped to his feet. "If you dare to move I'll—I'll put you out of the fight altogether."

"Don't—don't shoot me!" panted Dan Baxter in sudden fear. "I—I——"

"Do you give in?"

"Yes."

"Then keep still. Sam, guard him, will you? I want to see how matters are on deck."

"Yes, I'll guard him," answered the youngest Rover.

The fight on deck had been short and fierce, but our friends had had the best of it from the very start, and when Dick came up he found but little for him to do. Arnold Baxter lay where he had fallen, moaning piteously, while Buddy Girk and Bill Goss were in irons. Mrs. Goss still stood at bay, flourishing her stewpan over her head, while Mumps remained at a distance, his arms folded over his breast and an anxious look in his eyes.

"I won't go to prison!" shrieked Mrs. Goss. "You let me and my husband go."

"Mrs. Goss, you had best give in——" began Sergeant Brown, when Tom, sneaking up behind her, snatched the stewpan from her grasp. As she turned on the boy, Carter ran in, and in a twinkle she was held and her hands were bound behind her. Then the crowd turned to Mumps.

"I submit," said the misguided boy. "Didn't I tell you in the note that I would help you?"

"Yes, he has tried to do better," put in Dora. "If it hadn't been for him I wouldn't have had a mouthful to eat to-day."

"I guess we can trust him, then," said Dick. "But, Mumps, take care that you don't go back on us."

"I won't go back on you," said the toady. "I'm going to cut that crowd after this."

"You can't make a better move," was Dick's comment.

Now that affairs were in their own hands, our friends hardly knew how to turn next. After a discussion it was agreed to place the *Flyaway* in charge of Dick and Tom, who were also to carry Dora and Mumps. All of the others went aboard of the *Searchlight,* Arnold Baxter being carried by the police officers, who attended to his wound as well as the accommodations on board of the yacht permitted.

So far nothing had been said about the money and securities stolen by Baxter and Girk, but they were in a locker in the *Flyaway's* cabin, and easily brought to light.

"This is a big day for us," said Dick. "Won't folks at home be astonished when they hear of what we have done?"

"I cannot get home fast enough," said Dora. "Poor mamma, if only I knew she was safe!"

"Josiah Crabtree shall suffer for this," said Dick. "Remember, it was he who had you carried off by Mumps and Dan Baxter."

The *Searchlight* was already on the way and the *Flyaway* came behind her. The course was due west, and they kept on until the breakers could be heard in the distance. Then Martin Harris bore away to the northward.

With the coming of daylight the fog disappeared as if by magic, and they found themselves close to the seashore town of Lightville. Here there was a small river, and they ran into this and came to a safe anchor close to one of the docks.

On going ashore Dick's first movement was to send two telegraph messages, one to Rush & Wilder, telling them that the stolen securities and money had been recovered, and the second to Captain Putnam, breaking the news of Dora's safety and requesting the master of the Hall to acquaint Mrs. Stanhope with the fact and take steps toward Josiah Crabtree's arrest. Later on another message was sent, to Randolph Rover, so that the boys' uncle might no longer be alarmed over their safety. Sergeant Brown also telegraphed to his superiors.

Inside of an hour after landing, Arnold Baxter, Buddy Girk, Dan Baxter, and the two Gosses were safely housed in the Lightville jail. At first it was thought to arrest Mumps also, but he begged for his liberty, and promised, if let

go, to tell everything. As some witness would be wanted when the others came to trial he was taken at his word.

It was a happy party that started for Cedarville that evening. No one could have been more attentive than Dick was to Dora, and no one could have been more appreciative than the girl of what the three Rover boys had done for her.

At Ithaca a surprise awaited the crowd. Frank, Fred, and Larry were there to welcome them, and soon after Captain Putnam appeared.

"I am very glad to see you all safe and sound," said the captain, as he shook hands. "You have had a regular ocean chase, and no mistake."

"And how is my mother?" questioned Dora quickly.

"She is happy, Miss Stanhope; but the shock of your sudden disappearance has made her quite ill.'

"And Josiah Crabtree?"

"Has disappeared. Your mother said he wanted to marry her after you went away, but she would not listen to him. I imagine that after this he will keep his distance."

"He had better keep his distance—if he wants to remain out of jail," put in Dick.

The return of the boys to Putnam Hall was

the signal for a regular jollification, and my readers can rest assured that all of the cadets made the most of it. Captain Putnam ordered an extra dinner for them, and in the evening a huge bonfire was started on the campus, and, as the boys gathered around Dick, Tom, and Sam they sang "For he's a jolly good fellow!" until they were hoarse. It was a celebration never to be forgotten. "Just the right sort, for a home coming," as Sam expressed it.

"Let them have it," said the master, as he looked on. "They deserve it."

"You are right," returned George Strong. "Those Rover boys have proved themselves regular heroes."

Here I will bring to a close the story of the Rover boys' doings on the ocean while trying to rescue Dora Stanhope from her abductors and while endeavoring to recover the fortune stolen from Rush & Wilder.

Words cannot describe the happiness which mother and daughter felt when Mrs. Stanhope and Dora found themselves together once more. Tears were freely shed, and the widow blessed the boys who had done so much for herself and her child. She declared that her eyes were now open to the real wickedness of Josiah Crabtree, and

never more would she have anything to do with the man.

Rush & Wilder were immensely pleased to recover what had been taken from their safe, and when money and securities were returned to them they rewarded the Rover boys and the others handsomely for their work. But to this day Dick declares that the recovery of the stolen fortune was "only a side issue." "We were out to rescue Dora," he says. "And, thank God, we did it!"

In due course of time the evildoers were brought to trial, and with Mumps and the others to testify against them, all were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Being wounded, Arnold Baxter was taken, as before, to a hospital; but this time the authorities kept a close watch on him.

With their enemies in custody the Rover boys imagined that life at Putnam Hall would now run along smoothly. But in this they were mistaken. They had hardly settled down to their studies when a strange message from over the sea started them off on a search for their father, the particulars of which will be related in another volume, to be entitled: "The Rover Boys in the Jungle; or, Stirring Adventures in Africa." In this book we will not only meet Dick, Tom, and

Sam again, but also Dan Baxter and several others with whom we are already acquainted.

But for the time being all went well, and here we will leave the three boys, wishing them the best of good luck in the future.

THE END.